





**GENERAL JOFFRE
AND HIS BATTLES**



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GENERAL JOFFRE AND HIS BATTLES

BY
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(CAPTAIN X)

WITH PORTRAIT AND MAPS

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PREFATORY NOTE

THE writer of the following pages is one of the many talented and devoted young Frenchmen who, loving life, now hold it lightly compared to their love of France. It has been Captain Recouly's good fortune to have a share in much of the fighting, while his position on the General Staff has brought him into close relation with the men by whom the fighting is planned. Readers of *Scribner's Magazine* during the past year know him as "Captain X," and may be glad to have his articles collected in a permanent form. He also kept a journal while in the field during 1915, which was published as "La Bataille dans la Forêt," under the pen-name of "Jean L  ry." Part of this was used

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in his articles; the rest is here translated for the first time. As his work was necessarily done under difficult conditions, and not consecutively, occasional overlappings and repetitions may be found, but it has been thought that too much editing would take away from its freshness and simplicity.

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GENERAL JOFFRE AND HIS BATTLES

General Joffre and His Battles

I

GENERAL JOFFRE: THE VICTOR OF THE MARNE

IT was in the early days of September, 1914, those stirring and crowded days that preceded the great battle of the Marne. My division, retreating from Belgian Luxembourg by way of Mézières and Rethel, had just reached Vitry-les-Reims, some five miles north of Rheims.

“This,” I said to myself, “marks the end of our retreat. The Rheims forts, old as they are, will give us a fairly good base; and protected by them we shall give battle and win.”

Notwithstanding our steady retirement, nothing could have been better than the morale of our army. Twice already our division had been pitted in serious and bloody

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battle against the Saxon army of Von Hausen. On each occasion, though confronted by forces superior to our own, we had inflicted heavy losses on the enemy and remained the uncontested masters of the field. Nevertheless, after each battle the order to retreat (dictated, as we well knew, by considerations based on the situation along the entire front) had been given two or three hours later; and off we had started in the night, down the dark country roads, through the sleeping villages, abandoning to the invader yet another portion of the sacred soil of France.

"This time at least," said I to myself, "we shall stand firm and keep a solid grip above Rheims."

And now, at about eleven o'clock at night, the head of the staff suddenly sent for me. "We are to evacuate Rheims," he said, "and continue our retreat. You must start at once for Tauxières and get our staff quarters ready. The division will begin to march at midnight."

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I listened with a heavy heart. But there is this much good in the soldier's trade, that it leaves no time for discouragement. I had only ten minutes in which to wake my orderly and my chauffeur, to pack my belongings, and be off.

It was a moonless night, but beautifully, divinely clear. The air trembled with soft, warm breezes. I took my place beside the chauffeur to help him find the road, which neither of us knew. Not a soul was stirring in the streets of Rheims. In the deep silence of the night not even a footfall awakened the deserted squares, and there were no lights in any of the houses. It was like an abandoned town. In my perplexity as to the right road I aimed for the cathedral, whose huge yet slender mass stained the night sky with a darker shadow. The lofty towers seemed almost to touch the stars, and a mysterious serenity, emanating from them, enveloped the ancient city.

I stopped at the door of one of the hotels

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in front of the cathedral and rang the bell. After a long delay the sleepy porter appeared. I asked him to show me the road, and he pointed it out, and then asked: "Captain, are our troops falling back? Are the Germans coming?" I had not the heart to lie to the poor fellow after waking him up at that hour. "The Germans will be here tomorrow evening," I said. "But we shall come back and drive them out again."

As we climbed the slope among the famous vineyards, through Verzenay and Verzy, and began to cross the great forest of Rheims, my mind was full of dark thoughts, and of feelings of doubt and anguish. Should we succeed in holding our own against this terrible foe, who had prepared his campaign down to the smallest details, who was spending men and ammunition recklessly, hurling against us ten, even a dozen, times in succession the close formations of his battalions, spreading panic in the country by ruthlessly burning every village in his path and shooting down

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the harmless inhabitants? In proportion as we retreated and as he advanced, his military strength and his certainty of victory were both bound to increase, like an avalanche gathering bulk as it sweeps down the mountainside. And as to our own soldiers, would not this continuous retreat finally affect their spirits and destroy the self-confidence, the obstinate, invincible faith in the destinies of France, which was the one condition of victory whenever the great battle began?

These disquieting thoughts continued to haunt me as we drove on through the night. But little by little, with the first approach of dawn, my sombre presentiments vanished. What mattered a few leagues of countryside, a few villages, and even towns, temporarily abandoned to the enemy? France, I saw, was not a mere expanse of territory, not only groups of houses or monuments of stone. The France of to-day is her army, and the army's spirit remains unsubdued. Never had indifference to fatigue, to suffering, and even

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to death, complete self-effacement, complete surrender of one's self, attained a higher degree in officers and in men. Never had the flower of heroism so magnificently bloomed. And the spirit of the average citizen at home was the same as the soldier's. From Paris, where one hears the very heart-beat of France, one of our comrades had sent me the day before the report of a little incident that had struck me as worthy of the great traditions of Greece and Rome. As my friend came out of the church of the Madeleine and paused on the upper steps of the portico, a poorly but neatly dressed little boy, not more than ten years old, came up to him and pushed into his hand a bit of paper on which was written: "We must not despair; France cannot be beaten." My friend ran after the child and asked who had told him to distribute the paper. He learned that for two days and nights the boy's whole family—his mother, his two sisters, and an aged relative—had been steadily at work in their

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poor lodgings, writing several thousands of the papers which the lad was handing to passers-by.

From the humblest soldier to the highest chiefs the entire French army has complete, unflinching faith in its commander-in-chief. From the very first engagements his firm and resolute hold upon the reins had inspired his troops with courage and confidence. The result of our first encounters with the enemy had not been what we had hoped. The incompleteness of our organization, our lack of heavy artillery, our inadequate information as to the German army, all these deficiencies were cruelly evident in the early battles. Nor did all our generals display in the same degree the qualities of intelligence and energy required of a great military leader—for the simple reason that in times of peace it is all but impossible to prognosticate a general's worth in war. Only the test of battle gives the true measure of a general's merits. This or that brilliant reputation, won during the

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big manœuvres, falls to pieces with the first crack of the rifle and the bursting of the first shells; while an officer on whom only slight hopes have been founded may display at the first test the qualities of a born leader.

From the outset, whenever General Joffre detected in his generals the slightest weakness of character or talent, he promptly and pitilessly removed them. It mattered not if the delinquents were among his oldest comrades, his closest friends: they were at once replaced by those among their subordinates who, during the first battles, had established their military aptitude and their general superiority; and the entire army, by its silent verdict, its mute approbation, never failed to ratify these appointments.

One of my chiefs had seen General Joffre at the general headquarters two days before our retreat from Rheims. He had brought back from the visit an impression of absolute confidence. "I mean to deliver the big battle," the general had said to him, "in the most favorable conditions, at my own time,

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and on the ground I have chosen. If necessary, I shall continue to retreat. I shall bide my time. No consideration whatever will make me alter my plans."

I recalled all this as the motor rushed along through the night, and as I repeated to myself the words of the commander-in-chief, glorious with their hint of hope, our retreat seemed less unbearably painful. Since wait we must, we would wait.

We had not to wait long. Three days later, on the morning of September 5th, just as we reached a point a little to the north of Fère-Champenoise, a sensational order was brought to us. The retreat of the French armies was at an end. That very evening preparations for a general attack were to be made, and on the morrow the whole army, from Paris to the Vosges, was to assume the offensive.

The morning of the 6th of September, 1914, marks a capital date in the history of the world. It was the beginning of the great battle of the Marne. That morning General

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Joffre issued to our soldiers the great Order of the Day, which was read along the entire front. It reveals the unshakable confidence of the chief in his soldiers, and of the soldiers in their general:

“At the moment of engaging a battle on which the fate of the country hangs it is necessary to remind every one that the time has passed for looking backward. Every effort must be made to attack and to drive back the enemy. The hour has come to advance at any cost, and to die where you stand rather than give way. In the present circumstances no weakness can be tolerated.”

For four days and four nights the battle raged. On the evening of the fourth day every one of the German armies was in full retreat. At certain points the retreat had turned into a rout. General Joffre and his army had won the biggest victory of all time.

It is not too much to assert that a victory so complete, a recovery so startling, is with-

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out a parallel in military history. The only analogy it suggests is that of a wrestler, already down, with shoulders all but touching, who, leaping suddenly to his feet, takes his antagonist by the throat, throws him and makes him bite the dust. It is not surprising that some people believed in a miracle. But there are no miracles in battle. Miracles in war are due, nine times out of ten, or even ninety-nine times out of a hundred, to the heroism of the men and the genius of their chiefs.

General Joffre plays an open game. He is never afraid to show his hand. When he had won the victory of the Marne he himself undertook to show how he had won it. He has just published the series of his "General Orders" during the days before the great battle, from the 25th of August to the 6th of September, 1914. These despatches are official documents of indisputable authenticity and authority. They contain the irrefutable and naked truth, and they confirm

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the contention that the great battle of the Marne was clearly foreseen, and planned in all its details, by the commander-in-chief.

The first of General Joffre's orders is dated August 25th; but before dwelling on its importance and significance it is necessary to outline briefly the respective situations, at that date, of the French and German armies.

The French War Office was well aware of the plan of the German General Staff, which consisted in making a violent attack through Belgium, with the purpose of turning our left flank. All our officers knew that the German army would violate the neutrality of Belgium; but the enveloping movement of the German armies was made on a scale, and with an offensive dash, that entirely exceeded our expectations. We had not supposed it possible that the Germans, on the first day, could bring their entire reserves into action. But that was what they did; and the striking force of their army corps was thereby more than doubled. Their reserve corps were ready to

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support the active army; and these reserves were exactly as well trained, as well equipped, and as abundantly provided with heavy artillery as their active force.

For years past the German Government had been spending at least twenty millions of marks a year to maintain, among their continental neighbors, and especially in France, a horde of spies who had penetrated everywhere and ferreted out all the secrets of our War Office. A country as peaceful and republican as France has neither the money nor the resources, even if it had the inclination, to indulge in such extravagances of espionage. The German aim was to finish with France within a few weeks, in order to have a free hand to deal with Russia, while the latter country was still struggling with the difficulties of mobilization. At the outset, therefore, the Germans left a relatively small force on the Russian frontier: four corps of the active army (out of twenty-five and a half) and a few formations of the re-

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serve. All the rest—that is to say, about fifty army corps, or two million five hundred thousand men—were thrown at once against France.

France, owing to her inferior population, was unable to provide so big an army to face this formidable onset. The fact of this inferiority is one which cannot be too insistently dwelt upon. The French forces, at the opening of the war, must have been numerically inferior by at least a million men; while the British army, at the same date, numbered three divisions, or from seventy to eighty thousand men at the most.

What, in presence of the German plan, was to be the French retort? A plan based on the principle of the immediate offensive was held to be best suited to our national temperament and the well-known dash of our soldiers. Four simultaneous attacks were contemplated. The first was through upper Alsace toward Mulhouse; and Mulhouse was captured by us, then lost, and then a third

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time retaken. But this was only a secondary episode of the war.

Our second attack was through Lorraine and the passes of the Vosges, in the direction of Saarbourg and Saverne. After some successes on this frontier our troops, in the region of Morhange, came upon largely superior forces and very strong positions which the Germans had had ample time to fortify. Heavy artillery, with which the enemy was abundantly provided, played an important part in these early engagements. We had to retire. Lunéville was taken and Nancy threatened by German guns.

Our third plan of attack was through Belgian Luxemburg, and here, too, we had to beat a retreat.

Finally, our army on the left wing, supported by the British, was to assume the offensive in Belgium, and make a flanking attack on the German army, while the latter sought, by an enveloping movement, to cross the Meuse between Liège and Namur. A

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little delay in carrying out this plan threw away our chance of success. The battle of Charleroi, where the Anglo-French armies were engaged against very large forces, was a virtual defeat. Germany had pitted against us the main bulk of her forces, and the English and French armies were compelled to begin a rapid retreat. This released Von Kluck's army, which was left free to plunge headlong, fifty kilometres at a stride, on its march to Paris.

Such was the general situation about the 22d of August, 1914; such the imminent peril which General Joffre had to face. No heavier burden, no more formidable responsibility, ever weighed on human shoulders. A moment's discouragement, an instant's hesitation, and France would have been lost, and Europe and the rest of the world left to discover the meaning of such a disaster as the triumph of Germany.

General Joffre did not have that moment's hesitation. He showed himself the immediate

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master of a situation of unparalleled danger. He might have chosen to dispute with the invader every inch of French territory; but such a plan would have entailed the gravest risks. It would have necessitated giving battle at once and in the most unfavorable conditions. Our army on the left, operating with the British army, would not have had time to pull itself together; and, given the immense number of men that the Germans were able to put into the field, our forces would have been exposed to an overwhelming defeat.

The commander-in-chief's plan was of a much higher kind. He decided squarely to refuse battle both with his left wing and his centre and, while withdrawing these two armies, to carry out a fresh concentration of his forces which should quietly shift them from the east to the west. While Von Kluck was rapidly pushing southward, Joffre, with the object of turning his right flank, as rapidly formed a fresh army under the command of General Manoury. Here is the order of the

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day (dated August 25th) which embodies this project:

In the region of Amiens a fresh group of forces will be created by the units transported by rail (Seventh Corps), the Fourth Division of Reserves, and perhaps another active army corps, formed between the 22d of August and 2d of September.

Such was the origin of the army of Manoury, which, by menacing Von Kluck's forces, played so important a part during the battle of the Marne. The creation of this army was entirely due to the foresight of General Joffre.

Two days later, on August 27th, the commander-in-chief formed, at the very centre of the line, another army, which he placed under the command of one of our most eminent chiefs, General Foch. The creation of the Manoury army on the left, and of the Foch army in the centre — these are the two acts which contain in germ the victory on the Marne.

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It will be seen by the indisputable evidence of the dates above given that ten days before the great battle General Joffre had made all his preparations for it. The fresh shifting of our forces, the mobilization by rail of the various army corps, was effected without a hitch, and it only remained to await developments. Once Von Kluck had advanced sufficiently to uncover his right wing, thus exposing it to the attack of Manoury's army, the battle could begin.

The right moment arrived on the 4th of September. On that day cavalry reconnoissances and the reports of the aviators showed that Von Kluck had turned south-east, toward Meaux and Coulommiers, well off the straight road to Paris. Instantly, on the afternoon of September 4th, General Joffre gave the order to attack. The main lines of this order are as follows:

I. Advantage must be taken of the precarious situation of the first German army (Von Kluck) to bring to bear against it the

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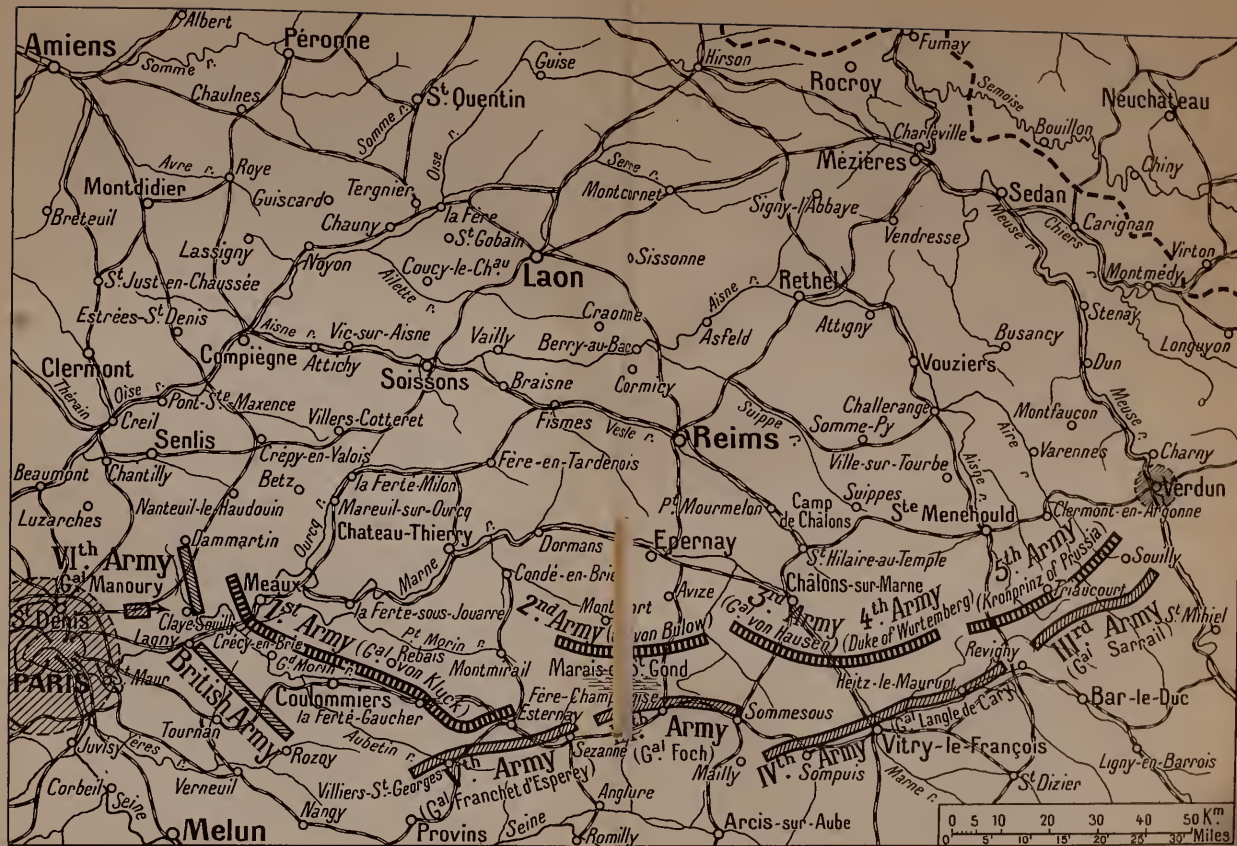
forces of the Allied armies on the extreme left. All arrangements will be made on September 5th, in view of an attack on the 6th.

II. The disposition of forces to be effected on the evening of the 5th of September will be:

(a) All the forces at the disposal of the sixth army (Manoury), northwest of Meaux, must be ready to cross the Ourcq between Lizy-sur-Ourcq and May-en-Multien, in the general direction of Château-Thierry. For this operation the elements of the first cavalry corps in the neighborhood will be placed under General Manoury's orders.

(b) The British army on the Changis-Coulommiers front facing eastward will be ready to attack in the general direction of Montmirail.

(c) The fifth army (General Franchet d'Espérey), in slightly closer formation on the left, will take its position along the general line Courtacon-Esternay-Sézanne ready to attack in the general direction of south-north. The second cavalry corps will secure the connection between the British and the fifth army.



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Position of the armies, September 5, 1914.



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(d) The ninth army (General Foch) will cover the right of the fifth army and hold the southern approaches of the marshes of St.-Gond. A portion of its forces will take up their position on the plateau north of Sézanne.

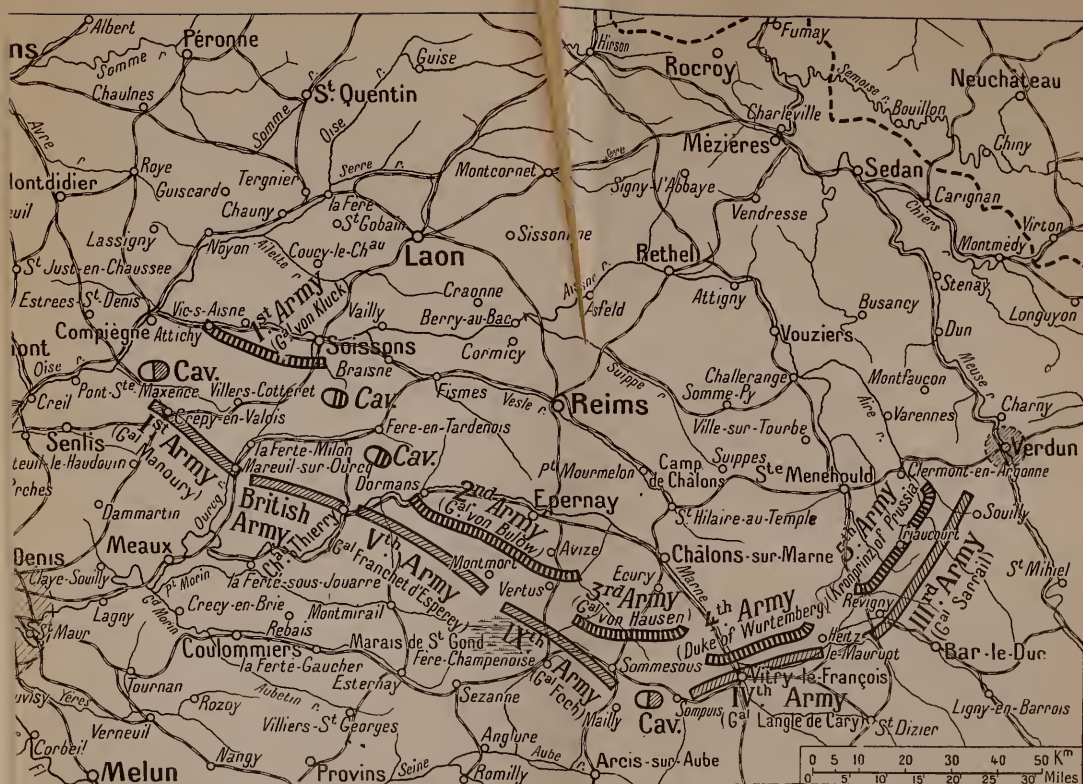
III. The offensive will be taken by these various armies on the morning of the 6th of September.

(Signed) J. JOFFRE.

On the morrow the fourth army, under General Langle de Cary, and the third army, under General Sarrail, received instructions in harmony with these general orders.

All preparations had been made and all the orders given. Everything which it was humanly possible for a great commander to do in anticipation of a great battle had been done. The result depended on the capacity of the chiefs and the valor of the troops.

Picture for a moment what must have been the state of mind of General Joffre on the 5th of September, the tragic hour on the eve of the great battle! Here was a man of



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Position of the armies, September 10, 1914.

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great moral elevation, of pure and ardent patriotism, intensely alive to the terrible responsibility weighing upon him; a character of the old heroic mould, modest and reticent, disdainful of vulgar ambition and self-advertisement; and this man was aware that in the battle which was to be fought on the morrow the very existence of France was at stake. If the battle was lost, Paris would be taken and France conquered for all time.

General Joffre knew the tragic and desperate nature of the crisis confronting him. With the fullest consciousness of that crisis, and moved by intense emotion, he despatched to the government at Bordeaux a telegram which, when it is made public, will show France that her chief is made of the stuff of Plutarch's men.

The gist of the message was as follows: General Joffre informed the President of the Republic that he had done all he could to save the state, that the die was cast, and that it only remained to await results. His tone

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was calm and confident. He affirmed his conviction that the impending battle would be fought under conditions favorable to France. He described the enemy as being held in a vise between Paris and Verdun; he declared that the spirit of the troops had never been better, and he summed up by saying that the preponderance of chances was on our side.

The wonderful forecast embodied in this despatch was soon to be realized. At the appointed moment all our armies opened a simultaneous attack. Manoury's army on the Ourcq so completely shattered one of Von Kluck's divisions that the German commander, threatened with immediate envelopment, was suddenly compelled to shift his forces to meet the British army. The British army and that of General Franchet d'Espérey, taking advantage of this retreat, plunged straight ahead, drove the German corps back by a vigorous thrust, and in this way gained a good deal of ground toward the

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north. At the same time all our armies were advancing along the entire line from west to east, each army fastening itself to the one preceding it with the successive forward jerks of a parrot climbing along a stick.

Those were soul-thrilling days. We who lived through them, in actual contact with them, knew that they marked a dividing line in our experience, and that henceforward all we did and were would gravitate about that central moment of our lives.

The Germans instantly saw the danger menacing them. They made a frantic effort to break through the centre of our line, between Sézanne and Fère-Champenoise, in the region of the marshes of St.-Gond. The Imperial Guard and all the picked troops were massed at that point. Their object was to overthrow Foch's army. By a series of repeated onslaughts, led with the most reckless violence, they attempted to pierce our lines and cut our armies in two. Once this result obtained, they would only have had to fall

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back against our left and right to compass our defeat.

At one time, on the third day and on the morning of the fourth (September 8th and 9th), it looked very much as if they might succeed. They had pushed back the whole right wing of the army of Foch. The Guard had occupied Fère-Champenoise. But the left of Foch's army still clung desperately to the outskirts of the plateau overlooking the marshes of St.-Gond. In vain the Germans multiplied their attacks and wore themselves out in prodigious onslaughts. The Moroccan division, under General Humbert, held fast to every inch of ground, replying to each German thrust by a still more furious assault. Not for a single instant did General Foch admit the possibility of retreat. At a critical moment one of his officers came to him. "General, my troops are worn out!"

"So are the Germans. Attack!" was the curt reply.

At the most crucial period of the struggle

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General Foch conceived and executed a manoeuvre which, together with Manoury's movement, was one of the determining causes of victory. The right of Foch's army had given way, while the left was still holding out. Instantly he transferred an excellent division from left to right, taking the Germans by an unexpected flanking movement and checking their advance.

The Germans, far from being able to pierce our centre, were by this time in the gravest peril. On their right wing the situation of Von Kluck's army was becoming more and more critical: it was in imminent danger of envelopment. Everywhere the Germans' losses had been terrible—some of their regiments lost a third of their strength. More than once I have heard General Joffre say that this prodigious slaughter was one of the main causes of the German retreat.

On the evening of September 9th the Kaiser was compelled to sign the general order for the retreat of the whole of his armies. Good-

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by to Paris, and the hope of a triumphal entry! The very troops which, a few days before, had swept so arrogantly through our villages now traversed them again with lowered heads. In many instances the retreat turned into a veritable rout. The German troops seemed astounded by the sudden disaster—the repulse was a staggering one. Two days after the battle the proprietor of the principal hotel at Châlons-sur-Marne told me a characteristic anecdote. A German General Staff had taken up its quarters in the hotel, which happens to be well known for its cellar. The general was a Royal Highness who was treated by the staff with the profoundest deference. On the evening of September 9th the officers had all gone to bed after an excellent dinner and much riotous drinking. Toward midnight there were hurried steps in the passages and the prince and his staff, hastily roused, rushed out of their rooms in their night-clothes. “We must be off at once!” shouted his Highness. “Order the

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motors! The French are here!” In fifteen minutes the hotel was empty—the whole General Staff had vanished, forgetting, in their panic, several cases of champagne of a vintage they had found greatly to their taste. The moral of the story is that the French troops only arrived two days later.

The victory of the Marne is immense, gigantic in character. It took place along a front of four hundred kilometres, which should be viewed as a whole—that is to say, from Paris to the Vosges—and not be studied at any isolated point of the line. The tendency to view it in that way has misled many people ignorant of all the facts of the campaign. They think only of the army of Manoury and its manœuvre. They forget all the other elements at work, and imagine it was that single manœuvre which determined the victory. To do this is like looking through the small end of a telescope. It is as if some one at a concert, who happened

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to be seated close to the violin or the violoncello, should conclude that the merits of the symphony were due to those two instruments alone. As a matter of fact, the applause is due to the leader of the whole orchestra, that is to say, to General Joffre. This is the inevitable inference to be drawn from any rational examination of the facts.

It is also said that but for Von Kluck's inexplicable manœuvre in turning to the south-east on September 4th, instead of immediately attacking Paris, the victory of the Marne could not have been won, the capital would have fallen, and the war soon afterward have come to a disastrous end. All these assertions are equally mistaken. If Von Kluck was really in a position, on September 4th, to end the war at a single blow, and did not do it, he is undoubtedly the most inefficient general who has ever commanded a German army. And, if this is the case, it is hard to see why the Kaiser keeps him in command and showers honors and decorations on him,

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when he ought obviously to have been court-martialed and shot.

It implies an unparalleled ignorance of military matters to suppose that the general at the head of one of the six or seven German armies then invading France was free to make so important a move without first getting into touch with the German General Staff. The truth is, Von Kluck could not dream of besieging Paris before getting well rid of those of our forces, in front and on his flank, which would have certainly fallen on him while he was engaged in the attack on the capital. He could not, and he had no right to, act otherwise than he did. It is an absolute rule of German strategy that the enemy's army must first be destroyed before the investment of a fortified place is attempted. In the present instance this rule was imperative. For (as will some day be known) there was already too big a gap, there was in fact a veritable hole, between the army of Von Kluck and the other German army on his

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left. General Joffre, as has been seen, has not hesitated to publish the series of his military orders previous to the battle of the Marne. Whenever his example is followed in Germany, and the orders of the German General Staff are published, it will be seen which of the two series of documents is distinguished by clearness and precision, and which is confused and vague.

The German orders given before the battle of the Marne happen to be in the possession of our staff, and I have had the privilege of reading them. At that time the German General Staff used ciphered radiograms, and as we had discovered the cipher all the communications of the German headquarters were immediately known to us. In the early days of the war the German War Office had but one purpose—to act rapidly and to strike hard. Strategic scruples did not hamper the German generals any more than diplomatic scruples hampered the German statesmen. The different German armies were engaged

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in a sort of steeplechase toward the centre of France. The fastest was to win the prize. The Germans were so confident in the force of their momentum that they fancied they could overwhelm and shatter everything they encountered. This confidence naturally grew in proportion as the French armies retreated. The Germans believed they were driving the French before them in headlong rout. They have never been brilliant psychologists, and the fine shades of the French temperament escaped their perspicacity, and doubtless always will. The fact is illustrated by the attitude and the utterances of Von Kluck on Sunday, September 6th, at Coulommiers. The picture is curious enough to claim a moment's attention, and we possess definite proof of its accuracy. Never have German pride and self-sufficiency broken out with finer effect. It is really worth while to record the attitude of Von Kluck on the day of the battle of the Marne.

The French soldiers had evacuated Cou-

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lommiers the night before. During the night the German troops arrived, battalion after battalion, and were immediately sent on toward the south. It was Sunday afternoon. The few inhabitants left in the little town had shut themselves into their houses. Suddenly a hundred or more German soldiers carrying revolvers rushed into the main street, knocking at all the doors and shouting: "Shut the windows, the staff is coming!" A quarter of an hour later, in a magnificent 60 h.-p. car, his Excellency General von Kluck arrived. He took up his quarters in the finest house in the town. One of his officers, who had preceded him, had already ordered dinner: two dishes of meat, peas and pork (his Excellency's favorite dish), washed down with champagne, and a good deal of it. The general enjoyed his dinner and, when it was over, settled himself down in a big arm-chair in the doorway. He summoned the fine military band which always accompanies him. "Some French airs," he commanded:

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“Only French airs—*Carmen*, *La Mascotte*.” The band played *La Mascotte* and *Carmen*, and Von Kluck’s satisfaction increased. “Why don’t the people turn up to listen to my band? They’ve never heard a better one!” He sent an imperious summons to his aged hostess, who presented herself in fear and trembling. “Don’t be afraid, madam,” he said affably. “Where are your husband and children?” The poor woman said that her husband was dead and that her three sons were in the army. “Oh, well, they’ll be Germans,” returned Von Kluck consolingly; “and so will you. The half of France is going to be German, and it’s the best thing that could happen to it. You’ll see what we’ll make of you when you’ve had a course of German discipline and culture. You French have a lot of showy qualities: what you want is discipline. We’re going to defeat your army—the job is half done now—and by the end of the week we shall be in Paris.” With this he allowed the poor lady to retire.

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The entire German army, from the soldiers to the generals, share the views of this typical chief. This is why it has made such a reckless expenditure of energy, striking right and left to the point of exhaustion in its uncontrollable frenzy of destruction. At the outset of the war the whole German army shared Von Kluck's conviction that everything would be over in a few weeks. One day our regiment had been fighting from dawn until sunset, withstanding seven or eight German attacks. Our men were utterly done up—they hardly had the strength to prepare their evening meal. We were all sure that that night the Germans, who were bound to be as tired as we were, and who had suffered enormous losses, would leave us time to get a few hours' sleep. But at about ten o'clock a terrible fusillade burst out suddenly all along the line of outposts—the quick-firing guns had begun the music which is so like the staccato notes of a mowing-machine bent on business. And thereupon there followed an astounding, terrifying impression—a great

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shower of star shells burst out from beyond the German lines, shedding over the entire battle-field the fantastic, shifting gleams of Bengal fires. Then search-lights, suddenly unmasked, sent a flood of blinding light along our front; and at the same moment we saw a German column, at least three battalions strong, charging toward our lines. The men advanced in close formation, four by four, as if on parade. We saw distinctly the subalterns and the officers, driving forward with the flat of their swords some soldiers who had fallen out of line. The regimental band was playing, fifes screaming, drums rolling. The whole astounding spectacle—the music, the illuminations, the brilliant search-lights, and the massed battalions—called forth from the colonel who was standing at my side: “It’s the finest show I ever saw in my life!”

Our outposts had hastily retired. Almost instantly our machine guns opened an infernal fire against this magnificent target. The rifles came to the aid of the machine guns and were joined by our “75,” which was still

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trained for action. Every shot made its mark in those serried columns. We saw whole lines go down: it was like a gigantic game of ninepins. This attack, for all its insane temerity, was absolutely without result, and almost the whole regiment must have been wiped out. During the four days and four nights of the battle of the Marne the Germans again and again rushed on death in the same way—the losses they suffered were appalling. Military critics, in Germany as well as in France, hold it to be an axiom that a troop which has lost by fire a quarter of its men is incapable of continuing the struggle, and the case of the Prussian Guard at St.-Privat is often cited as an instance. The cautious and reasonable Joffre is no spendthrift of his soldiers. At the battle of the Marne he indulged in no such luxury of hecatombs, and his self-restraint did not deprive him of victory.

Photographs and portraits have made the face of the commander-in-chief familiar to

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the whole world. The impression he produces is one of massive force and vigor. He is tall and robustly built, and there is great straightforwardness and kindness in his calm face crowned with white hair. I have often seen him at the general headquarters. They are situated in a delightful little town not far from Paris, a town known to all Americans who come to France; and the General Staff is lodged in a famous building familiar to visitors from overseas. The first impression received on entering the headquarters is one of quiet and repose. Once I was summoned there at the very moment when a great battle was being fought in Flanders. From the particular spot in which I stood all orders were being sent out, and there all the information from the whole front converged. The General Staff headquarters is both the heart and the brain of that gigantic organism, an army of three million men. One would have expected a scene of intense activity, a general sense of hurry and confusion; but

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nothing could less resemble what I saw. In the hall a few officers were passing to and fro with bundles of papers under their arms. In one corner a group of soldiers, bent over a table, were sealing some big envelopes. A lift took me to an upper story. I went down a narrow passage where two orderlies were on duty, and was ushered into the office of General Pellé, who is the right arm of the commander-in-chief. He wore the khaki of our Moroccan troops, whom he commanded before the war, and his handsome face looked somewhat thin and drawn from prolonged vigils and overwork.

General Pellé was for some time our military attaché in Berlin. He is thoroughly acquainted, not only with the German army, but with the German people. Our "Yellow Book" contains a report by him, written in 1912, which is a marvel of perspicacity, and even of prophetic insight. After a few moments' talk, he told me that General Joffre would receive me at once, and without fur-

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ther ceremony he opened a door on the opposite side of the room and led me into the great general's presence. The room was very small and furnished like an ordinary sitting-room in a small hotel. "The four feet square of my cabinet," said Richelieu; Joffre, too, might speak of his "four feet square."

The commander-in-chief was sitting at a small table on which there were two or three sheets of paper and a map. There is a look in his steel-blue eyes that all his photographs and portraits fail to show. It is a look that admits of no reply: there is finality in his glance. The minute and searching precision with which he questioned me about the object of my visit showed me that he knew in its smallest details every sector of the interminable front extending from the North Sea to the Vosges, from Nieuport almost up to Mulhouse. He listened attentively to my explanations, and put into a few words, the fewest possible, his observations and orders;

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then, with a vigorous handshake, he turned to other duties.

General Joffre gets up every morning at five o'clock and is always in bed by nine in the evening. Strict orders are given not to wake him except in cases of emergency. Self-command and insight are the dominant qualities of a great military chief, and neither of these qualities is possible without a good sleep. As often as possible the general gets away from his headquarters to visit the front and inspect his troops. I recall a day, two weeks after the victory of the Marne, when we were near Rheims, at the fort of Montbr . From the outworks, which formed a splendid observatory, we had a view of the entire battle-field. As we were watching the results of our gun-fire on the German trenches just across the valley, suddenly, without warning, General Joffre arrived with General Foch. He had come to congratulate our chief, General Humbert, on his magnificent conduct during the battle of the Marne, and

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a few cordial, moving words conveyed his joy in his officer's achievement.

Two powerful limousines for his officers and a third motor for detectives form the entire escort of the commander-in-chief. On his arrival at any particular point he reviews with the utmost care and precision the battalions under arms. He inspects everything, questions the soldiers, bestows decorations, showing an unflagging diligence in the fulfilment of this part of his duties, which brings him in constant personal contact with his men. After these inspections and reviews General Joffre and a dozen or more officers meet at a short military luncheon in some small town. The talk on these occasions is perfectly free from constraint, all the officers present frankly exchanging their impressions. The general himself does not say much—he has often been called “Joffre the Silent.” But he does not dislike to hear others talk and has no objection to laughter and gaiety; in fact, he is not without his own quiet

sense of humor. I once heard it remarked in his presence that the mustaches and hair of many of our generals had grown suddenly white since the war. "It's the worry, the fatigue, the responsibility," somebody suggested. "No doubt," the chief agreed; "and perhaps also the lack of certain indispensable toilet articles."

The conclusion to be drawn from all the conversations and all the isolated sayings of General Joffre is that he possesses an unshakable belief in the successful issue of the present war. This robust faith emanates from him like a powerful current. It is a pity that all those who criticise and lament—their number in France is luckily not great—all the fault-finders and unbelievers—cannot be given a bath of confidence at our general headquarters. They would come back cured.

General Joffre does not admit for an instant that there can be the slightest doubt as to our victory, our complete and compre-

hensive victory. And his faith in the outcome is based on the fact that, over and above the daily incidents and accidents of the struggle, he perceives its deep realities and profound determining causes. These causes are all in our favor. Even taking matters at the worst, as far as we are concerned, even supposing that we never succeed in breaking through the German lines and in driving the enemy back a kilometre; even in that case (and it is unthinkable) there remains for Germany the certainty of ultimate defeat and disaster. To consider only the question of reserves of soldiers, leaving aside the whole matter of money and other economic considerations, the resources of Germany and Austria are strictly limited. The day is at hand when these resources will be exhausted. Those of the Allies, on the contrary, are almost infinite; and victory is mathematically assured to them.

Germany, seventeen years ago (the calculation should be made from that date, since

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it is impossible to enlist soldiers under seventeen years of age) had fifty-five millions of inhabitants: in other words, a third more than France. Since the beginning of the war she has formed twice as many army corps as we have, and this virtually means that, relatively to the figure of her population, she has accomplished a far greater military effort than we. For instance, while France out of a thousand inhabitants enlisted one hundred soldiers, Germany out of the same number enlisted from a hundred and twenty-five to a hundred and thirty. These figures are indisputable. Germany has drawn much more largely on her reserves than France, and they are bound to be much sooner exhausted.

During the first months of the war the force left by Germany on the Russian front was relatively small—it represented scarcely an eighth part of her total strength. But as the Austrian army began to weaken and the menace of the Russian invasion of Hungary

became more pressing, Germany had to come to the rescue of her ally. It was impossible for her to withdraw any considerable number of troops from the western front, as she has been inaccurately said to have done. She transferred only some cavalry divisions which were not particularly useful to her, and a certain amount of heavy artillery; but she placed on the Russian front a considerable portion of the fresh formations then being created in Germany. It is only necessary to consider the furious onslaughts in Poland and in Galicia, where battles last for more than a month, to know that relatively few of those fresh troops will ever be in a condition to be brought back to the French or the Italian frontiers. In fact, by August or September every time we kill or wound a German soldier on our front Germany will have increasing difficulty in finding a substitute; and the time will eventually come when it will be impossible for her to find any. That moment will strike the hour of her defeat.

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The whole aggressive plan of campaign of Germany was based on a short, sharp assault lasting a few weeks or a few months. That was why she did not scruple to expend her maximum force at the outset. At the very first shock she utilized everything she could dispose of; and hereafter her strength, instead of increasing, must steadily diminish. Our own, on the contrary, is in almost all respects as steadily increasing. We have abundant reserves of men, since, in contradistinction to the German method, we have made only a small number of new formations. The English army is constantly growing, Italy is flinging into the *mêlée* her fresh troops, numbering, at the minimum, one million five hundred thousand men; and there still remains the inexhaustible reservoir of Russia. We are manufacturing more and more shells, and every day proves more emphatically the preponderating part which ammunition plays in the present war. Finally, our heavy artillery, which was deficient

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at the outset, is daily becoming more considerable.

These are only some of the reasons, all as solid as granite, on which the robust optimism of General Joffre is based. When people speak to him in discouraging tones he merely shrugs his broad shoulders and smiles. The one thing to beware of, in his opinion, is impatience. Germany is virtually a besieged citadel. She is holding firm to the very last moment, she seems to be making light of her enemies, she never ceases to proclaim her invincibility. But some day the citadel will fall, and all will be over.

Immediately after our victory on the Marne the Germans took to the trenches. That fact was of itself more than a half-confession of failure. For it should be noted that they might have retreated a little farther (as we ourselves had done two weeks before), and then manœuvred in such a way as to deliver a new battle which, if they had won it, would have given them decisive re-

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sults. Instead of that they condemned themselves to the wearing-out process of trench warfare, which precluded all possibility of a quick and resounding success. The hope of such a success is over for all time. It is no longer within their power to inflict on us the violent shattering blow they were so confident of dealing. All the attacks they have attempted since the battle of the Marne have been checked: the effort to invest Verdun at the end of September, 1914, the advance on Calais, the battle of the Yser in September and October, 1914, the offensive movement against Soissons in January, 1915. Since this last attack, that is to say, for more than six months, they have not made a single serious assault against the French front. Since January they have left to us the initiative and held themselves strictly and entirely on the defensive. They explain this inactivity by saying that they want to finish with the Russians once for all in order to be free to return with all their forces against the French. This ex-

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planation may satisfy the credulity of strategists beyond the Rhine, but two minutes' reflection will show what it is worth. There is no such thing as finishing "once for all" with the Russians. However badly they may now and then be beaten (and Germany has inflicted more than one serious defeat on them), the Russian forces invariably pull themselves together again and are ready almost at once to begin the struggle all over again. As Prince von Bülow has put it: "Fighting the Russians is like pounding a pillow."

The Austro-Germans have just driven the Russians back about two hundred kilometres in Galicia. There can be no doubt as to the reality of the victory, but it is a victory that can have no lasting consequences. The Russians, instead of giving battle on the Duna-jetz, are fighting on the Dniester; that is all!

Now, suppose that instead of this advance of two hundred kilometres on the eastern front Germany had been able to progress, say, some fifteen kilometres on the French

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front; that she had been able, for instance, to take Compiègne or Amiens. Would not the moral and material consequences of such an advance have been of a very different importance? Obviously, if Germany has not tried to do this, it is because she feels she is in no position to undertake it.

Such considerations as these determine the confidence of General Joffre. Whenever he speaks (and he talks as little as possible) it is with such arguments as these that he develops his views, which may be summed up thus: "We have only to keep to the path that we are now following to be sure of victory." For more than a month now, in the region about Arras, our armies have had an unbroken series of successes. It is true that they have been merely local successes; but some day one of these local successes will suddenly assume the character of a general success; and once Germany begins to be beaten her defeat will be rapid. The battle of the Marne marked the first short act of the war;

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the second act, played in the trenches, is a painful business, and is continuing longer than one would have supposed; but it is possible that the third and last act will be as short as the first.

In the solitude of St. Helena, Napoleon, who was not entirely without experience in such matters, often put to himself the question: "What are the qualities that make a great general?" It is rare—so he concluded—to find in one and the same man all the necessary attributes. The first essential for a general is that his intelligence or talent should be in stable equilibrium with his character or courage. The general (to use Napoleon's phrase) should be "carré," that is, "four-square"; by which he meant that he should be well-balanced. It was another of Napoleon's sayings that a general who has more intelligence than character resembles a ship which carries too much sail: at the slightest whiff of wind it risks capsizing. He

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often cited as an instance his adopted son, Eugène Beauharnais, whom he sought, by advice and by daily correspondence, to form for a military career. According to Napoleon, Prince Eugène was not marked by any exceptional gifts; but his faculties were so evenly balanced that he was nevertheless an excellent general.

Nothing could be truer than these observations; and they are marvellously applicable to General Joffre. The striking thing in his character is just this admirable balance, typically French. His moral and intellectual qualities, his brains and his character, are in perfect equilibrium; and he is above all, and to the full extent of the word, what our seventeenth century called a "grand honnête homme." He is quite without ambition, utterly disinterested, and without any desire for popularity or self-advertisement. His one dream, when he has beaten Germany and given back to France her former frontiers, with the place due to her among nations, is

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to retire to his little home in the Pyrenees and end his days in peace. Among the German generals who have been pitted against him none can for a moment be compared with him. Joffre won the victory of the Marne. Apart from their partial successes at the outset, the German generals who have fought in France have secured not one single victory. Only one German general has to his credit certain really big successes: Marshal von Hindenburg has more than once terribly beaten the Russians. But if Hindenburg is compared to Joffre an impartial judgment must give the French general the palm. The Russian army, when it is opposed to the German army, is in many important respects in a condition of unquestionable inferiority. It has at its disposal only a very rudimentary system of railways, and the railway is of capital importance in modern warfare. Its supply of ammunition has also, up to the present time, been utterly inadequate; and, owing to this double superiority, Hindenburg

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has been able securely and rapidly to concentrate his army corps against the Russians, and then to break through their lines by crushing them under a rain of shells. These considerations should never be left out of account in estimating his military merit. Hindenburg, if I may use a French phrase, has always "played on velvet," whereas Joffre has had to deal at every point with an army much better organized and infinitely better prepared than the French army. This fact proportionately enhances the praise to which he is entitled.

JOURNAL OF THE AUTHOR

September 11th, 1915.—Flameng, the painter, is in Argonne, making a series of very interesting sketches of our battle-fields. These studies, which are done with the utmost care and exactness, will be a most valuable contribution toward the history of the war. As he had expressed a wish to see the Château of Mondement, I was detailed to accompany

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him, of which I was very glad, and we set off on a radiant morning.

The road from Vitry-le-François to Fère-Champenoise follows pretty closely the line of part of the battle of the Marne. It was a year, almost to the day, since we won that great victory, which seems greater and more important as one gets further away from it; the lapse of time cannot fail to throw it into yet higher relief.

The harmonious unity of that tremendous contest is as striking as the immensity of its front. It is as measured and regulated as one of Racine's tragedies, or a formal French garden. Each of the elements of which it is made up depends upon the element next to it; the play of many forces, distinct yet converging, give to this great military event its crowning significance.

At Fère-Champenoise we took the road to Bannes. Here we came upon the line of Morin and the famous marshes of St.-Gond, marshes which are almost always, by

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the way, without water. The Germans had planted their heavy artillery on the heights above them to the north, and from there they could shell us with deadly accuracy.

In the villages through which we went the damage done by the war was being repaired; new roofs everywhere replaced those which the shells had shattered. The industry of our peasants, the elasticity of our race, which, however it may bend to the storm, springs back with all its vigor, is seen here in its full beauty. Women instead of men were working in the fields, but not one field was uncultivated. It was only just a year since war had been raging in these very places, and already it seemed remote, far back in the wide spaces of time.

I was eager to see Mondement again, for it was there that my division (the first division of Moroccan infantry) had made such a magnificent stand at the battle of the Marne. The most impressive view of the château is from the road beside the marshes of St.-Gond,

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as it stands on the edge of a high ridge, lifting its feudal outline proudly against the sky, and dominating with its heavy walls and towers the wide plain which lies below. It was on the plain that the battle was most furious, and from there the Germans hurled themselves on the ridge, after two days and two nights of terrific bombardment.

The château looks very much as when we left it after that fierce struggle on the 9th of September. The Germans had finally succeeded in taking it the night before; General Humbert, who commanded the Moroccan division, made up his mind to take it back again, no matter at what cost. And we did retake it, but only at the third assault, as night was closing in, much helped in this last attack by two guns which our men very pluckily dragged up the steep slope and planted only a few hundred yards from the château, so that we could pour grape-shot on the Germans while they still held it, and also as they tried to get away.

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The day after that bloody struggle the château of Mondement was an extraordinary sight. The iron gates and railings of its forecourt were twisted and broken, the thick house walls were pierced everywhere by shells and in some places crumbling altogether, while parts of the roofs were ready to fall in. Some of the outbuildings which had been burned down were still smouldering. This was the setting for a swarming and seething mass of infantry, Zouaves, wounded and dying men, with German prisoners by the hundred.

And although twelve months have passed, everything still bears mute witness to the violence and intensity of the conflict. The owner has been satisfied with repairing the main part of the roof in a summary manner, which takes away from the picturesqueness of the ruins; the hideous patch of new slates contrasts ill with the fire-scorched stones and charred beams. Where the stables and outbuildings stood a little heap of ashes and rusty iron is all that is left of his luxurious limousine.

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Nature, however, is already coming into her own again, and under this flood of sunlight, in this soft air, the château does not convey any impression of sadness or gloom. Mondement bears its scars gallantly, like a strong fighting man who holds his head high and looks the future in the face.

At the back of the main building a great breach was made in the surrounding walls, and through it we went into what was the garden, now overgrown with flourishing weeds, among which some flowering plants struggle patiently. While our infantrymen attacked the principal entrance, it was here that the Zouaves made their assault. The Germans, threatened on all sides, within a hand's breadth of being surrounded, suddenly took to flight, jumping out of the second-story windows and tumbling over the walls.

What a setting for a war picture — the stern old tower in the corner with the swarm of Teutons, hunted hard by our men, pouring out headlong and running for dear life!

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No wonder that my companion was carried away by it, and set to work on his sketch at once.

Many of the huge old trees in the park were split and battered by shells, which made me remember one tragic incident of the battle. The Germans had brought very heavy artillery fire to bear on the château, from which General Humbert was directing the fighting. One of my comrades was standing waiting for orders when M. Baur, the surgeon-in-chief, said to him: "Why do you expose yourself so unnecessarily? Do as I am doing—stand behind a tree." Two minutes afterward an enormous shell struck full on that very tree, cutting it in two as if it had been a match, and killing the surgeon instantly. My friend, who had remained quietly standing twenty yards away, was not even scratched. Such are the chances of war and destiny!

A few days before that, German shells had been falling fast into a field occupied by

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some Zouaves, and making great holes in the ground. The officer in command, seeing that one of the men looked rather uneasy, said to him, half in joke and half in earnest: "Do you want me to show you a sure way not to be hit? Put yourself into the next hole made by a shell; two never strike in the same place." A big, funnel-shaped hole opened close beside him as he spoke, and to practise what he preached he crept into it. A few seconds afterward another shell did strike exactly in the same place, smashing him into a jelly.

Near the road which leads to Broye, a churchyard, always decorated with flags and flowers, is full of the graves of French soldiers, killed close around the château. The little church to which it belongs had a very hard time during the bombardment. On the morning of September 10th, before we left Mondement, the general and some of his officers went there to the funeral of the surgeon-in-chief. It was an impressive ceremony. The

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walls were full of gaping holes, the roofless choir open to the sky; a soldier-priest recited rapidly the prayers for the dead, and then we left our comrade in one of the many hastily made graves.

The wounds of the little church are not yet healed, but the worst holes have been covered with big pieces of canvas. On one of the walls is a list of the names of officers of the 77th who fell in the attack on the château, that intrepid regiment which, helped by the Zouaves of the Moroccan division, finally wrested Mondement from the enemy. I can see it still, climbing the steep ascent at Broye, in the blazing midday sun; the men haggard, dusty, breathing hard, straining on as they near the battle, heroic in their impetuous energy. Fast, faster yet! Their help is sorely needed, for never has the situation been so desperate. It is the most critical moment in the great battle which will decide the fate of France. They know it, they feel it, her brave soldier-sons, and for her sake they press on,

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choking with dust and thirst, up the exhausting hill, with quicker and yet quicker step.

On every side the storm of battle rages; the bombardment grows more and more intense; long lines of wounded go trailing down toward the village; the heavy ammunition caissons creak and clatter, as their horses, flogged into a fast trot, drag them, swaying and lumbering, up the steep track.

The passing of that regiment, marching steadily to victory in the midst of the tumult and anguish, will always remain to me one of the most noble and inspiring memories of the war.

II

THE FRENCH OFFENSIVE IN CHAMPAGNE

(SEPTEMBER—OCTOBER, 1915)

AT the crossways near the batteries one has to leave the highroad which, at this point, is raked by German guns, and follow a rutty track that makes a long circuit through the fields. Near the crossways, at the A — farm, the soldiers of the colonial corps, who have already spent one winter there and are cheerfully preparing to spend another, have built themselves the queerest and most exotic of villages — a real Sudanese settlement of conical-roofed huts, shaped like a Mandarin's hat. In the middle of the village is a tiny wooden church, with a belfry that does its best to taper up into a spire. A soldier-priest says mass there every Sun-

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day. He and the altar take up nearly the whole of the space inside the church, while the faithful gather outside, piously following the service. On the façade is a Latin inscription:

REGINÆ VICTORIÆ
PILOSI MILITES ÆDIFICARUNT HANC
ECCLESIAM

“To the Queen of Victory the Poilus (*Pilosi Milites*) have erected this church.” (The “Poilus” have not all forgotten their humanities !)

Just beyond there rises a steep slope bristling with batteries; on its crest are the artillery observation-posts. They are admirably fitted up and protected by thick courses of logs and beaten earth. A general is there, attentively examining with his field-glass the opposite slope, the greater part of which is in German hands. The general is one of the youngest chiefs of the French army. When hostilities broke out he was a colonel commanding a brigade; now, after just twelve months of war, he stands on one of

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the highest rungs of the ladder. He is tall, slim, young-looking, with an air of extreme distinction, quick, incisive speech, and resolute blue eyes. Whenever those eyes of his light on a new face he feels the immediate need to label and classify it and store away the image in some pigeonhole of his marvelously lucid memory, where thereafter it will always have its distinctive place. Looking at him and listening to him, one has the impression that the art of warfare is above all things a matter of precision, foresight, and tenacity. The masters of military science, the men predestined to shine in war, are those in whom the balance between brain and character, between understanding and willing, is most perfectly adjusted.

General Pétain, having finished his minute inspection of the enemy's lines, emerges from the obscurity of the observation-post and descends by zigzagging communication trenches to the motor awaiting him at the foot of the hill. When he drives off he leaves on all of

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us the impression that his visit portends some big event.

We were in the first days of August, 1915 — it was just a year since the war had begun. The great German scheme of taking Paris and subjugating France in a few months — or a few weeks — had utterly failed. The battle of the Marne had broken down the first German offensive; six weeks later the furious dash on Calais was no less effectually checked. As for the numerous local attacks in the Argonne, in the course of which thousands of men, the best perhaps of the German army, were recklessly sacrificed in the effort to enhance the military prestige of the Kronprinz — all these attacks were far too local and limited to produce any lasting result.

Despairing of a decisive success on the Western front, the Germans last spring turned the weight of their forces on the Eastern lines. To help out the demoralized army of Austria-Hungary they began, first in Gali-

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cia and then in Poland, a vigorous offensive which made them masters of a considerable extent of territory. Their formidable heavy artillery and their almost inexhaustible reserves of munitions gave them a rapid ascendancy over the Russian army, which, at that time, lacked not only munitions but rifles. Russia made a magnificent defense; but in August, 1915, her armies were in a difficult position. The German hopes, which had ebbed during the previous winter, were once more at the flood. It was clearly our business, on the Western front, to draw off some of the army corps which were threatening to break through the lines of our Allies.

The French offensive in Artois, made four months earlier, on a narrow front, had resulted brilliantly. It had confirmed the faith of France in the valor of her troops and in the vigor and intrepidity of their powers of attack; it had proved that, even after a winter of stagnation in the trenches, the French army had lost nothing of its dash.

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At the same time, the movement had shown that the German defenses, in spite of their perfection, can be successfully attacked and taken if only the attack is carefully enough studied and minutely enough prepared on the lines which previous experience has indicated. So much we knew last August; and the time seemed to have come to renew the assault of the previous spring on a larger scale and with more important forces.

Those forces were now available. The arrival of large English reinforcements had allowed the English front to be lengthened and had thereby released a corresponding body of French troops. That it is always a delicate operation to substitute, along any part of the front, one body of troops for another, is a fact that must be obvious to the most superficial student of the art of war. The present war is one of scientific precision and complexity. The solidity of any portion of the front is insured only by a combination of precautions and provisions as intricate

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and smoothly running as the wheels of a complicated machine. If one of the wheels stops the whole machine is likely to break down. The artillery fire, for example, must be so accurately regulated that the shells fall with mathematical precision at the predetermined point, without even a few yards' deviation. The attainment of such a result necessitates extraordinary exactitude of aim, observation-posts skilfully selected, and such perfect telephonic communication that, at a word of command, batteries several kilometres away can instantly and unerringly pour a hail of shell on any given point.

The substitution of one army corps for another necessitates a change of artillery-men, telephonists, sappers and miners, and so on; and the exchange must be carried out without the least delay or the slightest break of continuity along the front. In the present instance the feat was accomplished with complete success. Everything had been so intelligently prepared that when the English

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front was extended the change did not produce the slightest fluctuation anywhere along the line. The fact augurs well for the future.

Some of our army corps, which had taken part in the May offensive in Artois, had meanwhile had time to rest and reform. The attacking power of a body of troops is exactly analogous to the nerve-power of a man. When a man is young, active, and full of life, no matter how great his temporary exhaustion, a few days of rest and a few nights of sleep will put him on his feet again. The French army is in this happy prime of its recuperative powers. Such and such a regiment or division may return from a hard battle considerably depleted; but after a few weeks of rest in good quarters, where the men can eat, sleep, and wash, the troops will have recovered their original temper and be ready to meet a fresh onset.

This surprising elasticity, this promptness in throwing off fatigue and suffering, is not

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only the dominant characteristic of the French soldier, but the fundamental quality of the whole race — the quality which again and again has shone out in its long history.

Every preceding experience of the war had shown that an attack, to have any chance of success, must be backed by formidable artillery with an almost inexhaustible supply of ammunition. The time had come when this force of artillery was at our command, and this supply of ammunition in our reserves. We were beginning to see the result of the prodigious industrial effort by which France, within the space of a few months, had mobilized the greater part of her factories to the sole end of the intensive production of war material. At any moment we chose it was in our power to sweep the German lines with a deluge of shot and shell.

The ground chosen for the attack, which extended from Auberive to a point east of Ville-sur-Tourbe, covers a length of about

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twenty-five kilometres, and is far from being an undiversified surface. Looking from west to east, it presents the following features:

(1) A glaciais about eight kilometres wide, of which the gentle slopes are covered with scattered clumps of trees. The road from St.-Hilaire to St.-Souplet, passing by the Baraque de l'Epine de Vedegrange, is nearly on the axis of this glaciais.

(2) The hollow at the bottom of which lies the village of Souain. The first line of German trenches followed the inner lip of this hollow. The road from Souain to Somme-Py makes, as it were, the diameter of the half-circle. The Navarin farm, three and a half kilometres north of Souain, is on the crest of the hills commanding the hollow.

(3) North of Pérthes comes a level stretch running between the wooded hills of the Trou-Bricot and the Butte-du-Mesnil, like a long corridor three kilometres wide, barred at intervals by lines of trenches and abutting on a series of heights, the so-called "buttes

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de Souain," the "côtes"* 193 and 201, and the "butte de Tahure," crowned by the German second lines.

(4) North of Mesnil is a very strong position, bastioned on the west by the twin heights of the Mamelle Nord and the Tra-pèze, and on the east by the "butte" of Mesnil. Between these two points the German trenches formed a powerful curtain, behind which a broken region of dense woodland extends to Tahure.

(5) North of Beauséjour is a bare stretch of easy country sloping up gradually in the direction of Ripont to the farm of the Maisons de Champagne.

(6) North of Massiges the powerfully fortified "côtes" 191 and 199, which look on the map like the pattern of a hand, form the eastern flank of the German defenses. From here the ground slopes away gently toward Ville-sur-Tourbe.

* The numbers of these "côtes," or hills, indicate their altitude in metres.

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The two chief positions of the German works lay from three to four kilometres apart. The deeper of the two was formed by three or four lines of trenches, separated from each other by barbed-wire entanglements and running back to a depth of from four hundred to five hundred yards. The second position consisted of a single trench, reinforced here and there by a support trench. This portion of the line, and the barbed-wire entanglements preceding it, were built almost entirely on the reverse slope of the hill, so that it was extremely difficult for our artillery to get the range.

In addition to these main points of the line, admirably organized centres of resistance had been formed wherever the ground permitted — so many little fortresses, nests of concealed mitrailleuses, to which the troops of defense had orders to cling to the last round of shell if the intervening trenches were overwhelmed.

It is obvious that the attack of lines or-

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ganized on this scale could have nothing in common with the war of manœuvre that preceded the battle of the Marne. This was a wholly different kind of conflict, a siege war with methods and regulations of its own. To form an idea of it one must turn to the record of the great sieges of history, and notably to that of Sebastopol.

The first necessity for the attacking army was to know with the utmost accuracy the exact place of every German trench, the depth of the barbed-wire defenses, and the position of the machine guns and the batteries. Thanks to our many means of information, we were fully instructed on all these points. Every feature of the German positions was marked on a map and known by its special designation. The attacking troops knew exactly what was ahead of them and where they were going.

The arrival of the troops had begun well in advance of the attack. Along the rail-

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ways and on the highroads there had been for days an uninterrupted stream of trains and motor-trucks. The region about Châlons was swarming with soldiers.

The landscape of mid-Champagne, the "Champagne pouilleuse," where so often in past times the destinies of France have been fought out, is monotonous, but not without beauty. It is a region of untilled fields, of scattered pine forests, heaths, and ponds, traversed by beautiful straight roads which seem purposely to avoid the few and widely separated villages. In these latter the half-timbered houses are all of the same type, and mostly several centuries old. They were so much fuel for the Kaiser's bonfires, and it did not take many of his incendiary tablets to set them ablaze.

Preparations were going rapidly forward; the sense of momentous things was in the air. Day by day, as the decisive hour drew nearer, the great army massed for the attack felt its ardor and impatience grow.

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The generals and the commanding officers exhorted their men; but words were unnecessary. Never had the tone of the French troops been finer; never had France possessed a more magnificent army than that gathered last autumn on the plains of Champagne. It was my good fortune to assist at several of the rounds of inspection, during which our most brilliant general, gathering about him his officers and men, set forth in a few words the effort and the self-sacrifice that their country required of them; and on every sternly set face the same look of heroic abnegation, the same resolve to strike hard and conquer, made mute response to his appeal.

The artillery preparations had begun three days earlier, on the 22d of September. The fire was kept up night and day, with a predetermined rhythm and according to a carefully regulated plan. The objects to be attained were the following: the destruction of the wire entanglements, the burying of

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the defending line in their underground shelters, the wrecking of the trenches and the parapets, and the cutting off of the communication trenches.

The fire raked not only the first-line trenches but the support trenches and even the second-line positions. At the same time the long-range guns were bombarding the various headquarters, the encampments, and the railway-stations, cutting off the railway communication and interrupting the bringing up of supplies.

From a height above Massiges I looked on for hours at this bombardment. Never have I seen one approaching it in violence. The shells burst so close to each other that the puffs of white smoke along the heights were merged in a single cloud. It was like looking at a multitude of geysers in full ebullition. The air was shaken by an uninterrupted roar, against which, now and then, a huge detonation would detach itself with a crash that seemed to shake the earth: it

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was the explosion of a heavy projectile from one of the big guns.

It was not the first bombardment I have followed. During the Russo-Japanese War, on the second day of the battle of Liaoyang, I saw the whole Japanese artillery concentrate its fire on the peak of Shoshan a few hours before the infantry assault. On the last day of the battle of the Marne, from the heights opposite Mondement, all the batteries of our division sent an infernal blast of shell against the summit crowned by the château, which was held by the Prussians. But these bombardments were as nothing compared to the present attack. The dazed and distracted German troops completely lost their heads. Every few moments they sent up star shells as a signal to their artillery to open a curtain fire against the French. The unfinished letters found on many of the prisoners taken after the attack show the prodigious effect of this deluge of steel. A German soldier

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writes, on September 25th: "I have received no news from home, and shall probably receive none for several days. The postal service has stopped; the whole line has been so violently bombarded that no human being could hold out. The railway is so continuously shelled that all trains have ceased running. We have been in the fighting line for three days. During these three days the French have shelled us so incessantly that our trenches are completely wiped out."

Another wrote on the 24th: "For the last two days the French have been bombarding us like madmen. To-day one of our shelters was demolished. There were sixteen men in it, and every one of them was killed. Many others were killed besides, and masses of men were wounded. The artillery fire is almost as rapid as that of the infantry. The whole front is covered by a cloud of smoke which hides everything. The men are dropping like flies. The trenches are a heap of wreckage."

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Still another, writing on the same day, says: "A rain of shell is falling on us. Our kitchen and provisions are cannonaded all night. The field-kitchens no longer arrive. Oh, if only the end were in sight! Peace! peace! is the cry on every man's lips."

An artilleryman of the 100th Regiment of field-artillery writes on September 25th:

"We have been through awful hours. It seemed as if the whole world were crumbling away. We have had heavy losses. Last night one company of two hundred and fifty men had sixty killed. A neighboring battery lost sixteen.

"The following instance will show you the frightful power of the French projectiles. A shelter five metres below ground, roofed with two layers of logs and two and a half metres of earth, was smashed like a match."

The captain commanding the third company of the 135th Regiment of German reserves writes in his report: "Send us a supply of rations at once. We have received no

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provisions to-day. We are in urgent need of flares and hand-grenades. Is the sanitary column never coming to look after our wounded?" And a few hours later: "I insist on immediate reinforcements. My men are dying of fatigue and want of sleep. I have no news of the battalion."

The artillery preparation was at the highest pitch of efficiency. We had done all that it was in our power to do. There remained one important factor of success; but that, alas! was an incalculable one. No one could foresee the weather, and much depended on our having a fine day for the attack. Clear weather would give us an immense advantage by facilitating that co-ordination of action between the infantry and the supporting artillery on which success in the offensive so largely hangs. Once the attacking columns were thrown into the furnace, it was vitally necessary for the staff and the artillery to keep in constant touch with them, to know

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exactly how far they had advanced, and to be able at each step to support and direct them.

The assault on the second-line positions also depended for its success on a clear atmosphere; for this second position, usually placed on the reverse slopes of hilly ground, is so extremely difficult to discover that its wire defenses can be only partially destroyed by the artillery.

During the days preceding the general attack the sky, which had hitherto been radiant, began to grow cloudy. Toward night-fall on the 24th the clouds melted away before a moon that seemed to promise a return of fine weather, a promise which the next morning unhappily belied. By daybreak a fog had closed down on the lines and a thick drizzle was beginning to fall.

But no atmospheric conditions could damp the feverish impetuosity of our troops. The moment for the general attack was set for a quarter past nine. During the night all the

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attacking troops had taken up their positions. The soldiers lined all the parallel trenches, and the trenches of communication by which the supporting column was to be brought up. Every officer had set his watch by the time of the general headquarters.

One must have lived through such moments to realize their tragic and passionate beauty. Hundreds and thousands of men in the vigor of their youth are massed there together awaiting the shock. Many of them — and they all know it — are inexorably marked for death. All of them feel the great shadow groping for them, invisible yet ever present in their ranks; but its nearness, far from weakening their courage, touches their resolve with a stern and manly gravity.

By seven in the morning I was at a commander's station from which part of the battle-field was visible. Our artillery fire still went on, ever intenser and more furious, as though seeking, during the minutes that remained, to crush and submerge such portions of the

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German lines as had escaped our heavy guns. It was obvious that, after three days of such uninterrupted bombardment, the Germans must know that the decisive hour was at hand. Every few seconds flares rushed up from their lines, imploring the curtain fire that was to stop our infantry.

Suddenly, at the preordained moment, the French, headed by their officers, revolver in hand, flung themselves out of the trenches along the whole of the immense line. In order to maintain the necessary discipline and self-control of the troops under the deadly fire that awaited them, each section was marshalled into line as soon as it reached open ground. Then, at double-quick so that they should not lose their wind by too impetuous a dash forward, they broke in a first immense wave against the German trenches. Hardly had one wave of infantry swept forward when another surged up behind it and flowed impetuously in the same direction. The advance was like that of a

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mighty sea whose irresistible breakers must undermine the rockiest coast.

The speed of the French advance was so great that the Germans were almost everywhere taken by surprise. All their first-line trenches were submerged. The troops who occupied them were all killed or gave themselves up; and the infantry swept on to the second line. On the way it captured a large number of German cannon, machine guns, and heavy pieces; the artillerymen fell where they stood. Wherever a German defensive work was too solidly organized to be taken with a rush, it was invested by our troops; and the enemy, thus encircled, surrendered in thousands. At certain points of the front our infantry poured ahead with such impetuosity that the artillery, to support it, had to limber their guns and move them forward, exactly as in open battle. There could be no more amazing proof of the vigor and vehemence of the French attack.

Unhappily, it was not to be hoped that

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the forward movement should everywhere strike the same pace. Irregularity of advance is one of the inevitable conditions of siege war. The lines of least resistance are bound to be carried with relative speed; while at points where the difficulty of the ground or the greater courage of the defenders makes the advance harder, progress necessarily slackens. Therefore, a few hours after the first assault, the line attacked, instead of being straight, has been bent into a series of perilous zigzags.

Nevertheless, after two or three days of fierce fighting, the French troops had achieved important results. To form an idea of what had been gained, it is necessary to consider separately each of the sectors of the front; for in each one the struggle assumed a different form and had a different outcome.

In the region to the right of the Epine de Vedegrange the advance of our troops was very rapid. At this point there was an extremely strong German centre of resistance,

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composed of a triple and a quadruple line of trenches, machine-gun blockhouses, and a bit of woodland covered with one of the most intricate systems of defense along the German front and giving shelter to numerous concealed batteries. But the whole of this sector was taken by a sudden and irresistible dash. In spite of heavy losses, in spite of the fatigue of incessant fighting, the French swept on and on, leaving behind them only enough men to scour the conquered region and break down its centres of resistance. On the 27th of September, toward evening, our troops were in touch with the German second line; at two points we had even got a footing in them, making a breach of about five hundred yards. Unluckily, it was impossible to widen this breach sufficiently to reap the reward of our success. German heavy batteries concentrated their strength on the opening, and hidden machine guns swept its sides with a fierce enfilading fire. Nevertheless, the results achieved in this

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sector figure up as follows: the taking of fifteen square kilometres of ground riddled with trenches and fortified works, of forty-four pieces, seven of 105 mm. and six of 150 mm., and of more than three thousand prisoners.

In the Souain sector the enemy line swept a great curve about the village. At certain points the German trenches were over a kilometre from ours. It therefore became necessary, when the offensive was planned, to push our works far enough forward to facilitate the attack on the German front. This subterranean engineering was carried out with incomparable pluck and energy. Leaving the trenches at night, our soldiers literally bounded across the intervening space. When they reached the designated point they dug themselves in, afterward linking their new line to the trenches they had left by communication trenches. This exceedingly difficult exploit was actually accomplished under the eyes and under the fire of the enemy, and the parallel trenches followed the

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curve of the German line at a distance of less than two hundred yards.

The attack began simultaneously at three points. To the west we advanced toward the wooded ground; in the centre we followed the line of the road from Souain to Somme-Py, in the direction of the Navarin farm; to the east we bent toward the woods which are intersected by the road from Souain to Tahure, and toward the "buttes" of Souain. Our advance was extremely rapid. To the left we covered two kilometres in less than an hour; in the centre, three kilometres in forty-five minutes. By ten o'clock we were abreast of the Navarin farm, and a glance at the map will show the amazing rate of our progress.

Toward the east it was harder to make headway. The Sabot wood was full of German machine-guns, which greatly facilitated the enemy's resistance. But this centre of defense was surrounded and taken, enabling our troops to close up with those which were

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attacking to the north of Perthes. The Germans were completely encircled, and, leaving only a sufficient force to reduce the position, the main part of our troops pushed on.

Those left behind sent parlementaires to demand the surrender of the Germans. They were met by rifle fire, upon which they attacked the defenders with the bayonet. The survivors surrendered and were sent to the rear, and a number of batteries and a large amount of material remained in our hands. By the 28th we were in contact with the second German line. Our troops had been magnificent, and they had been led by generals and officers whose courage and disregard of self may be measured by the fact that one general of division and four colonels had already been wounded, and two colonels killed.

Between Souain and Perthes lies a wooded region where violent fighting had already taken place in the previous February. We had then carried a part of the German

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trenches, and the enemy, aware that the point was a vital one, had provided it with powerful defenses. First came an almost triangular salient, which was very strongly held — we called it the Pocket. Beyond, the formidably organized defenses of the Trou-Bricot wood presented an almost insurmountable obstacle. This bit of country, pocketed by craters and seamed and cross-seamed with trenches and communication trenches was nearly impregnable; yet it failed to check the impetus of our troops.

The way in which the Pocket and the Trou-Bricot were carried may be regarded as a model of that particular type of warfare. The plan of attack, marvellously conceived, was yet more marvellously executed. The first thing to be done was to take the Pocket. At the appointed hour our batteries progressively lengthened their range, while the infantry dashed forward. The attack was carried out in perfect order, and half an hour later, at a quarter before ten, the two

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columns which had stormed the extremities of the salient were in contact. The work was surrounded and the surviving defenders surrendered. At the same time a battalion got a footing on the southern edge of the wood of the Trou-Bricot. The succeeding battalions, skirting its eastern edge, executed a perfect left turning movement and formed in echelon along the communication trenches. Meanwhile, to the north of Perthes our troops had pierced the three lines of German trenches and, covered by our artillery, were sweeping on to the "York" trench. They took it almost without striking a blow. Farther to the east, along the road from Perthes to Tahure, greater difficulties were encountered. A German mitrailleuse in a shelter kept up a troublesome fire; but finally one of our infantry officers, with a sergeant, succeeded in bringing up a gun to within a little over three hundred yards of the mitrailleuse and promptly smashed it.

Toward the end of the afternoon one of

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our regiments had reached the road leading from Souain to Tahure. The Trou-Bricot wood was thus almost completely encircled, and our soldiers dashed into the German encampment from all sides and swept it clear of its defenders. The surprise was complete. Some of the German officers were taken in bed; this fact, which is absolutely established, testifies to the amazing rapidity of the attack. It shows also the confidence of the Germans in the security of their position. They were certainly justified in thinking the Trou-Bricot secure from attack. They had spent the whole winter and spring in perfecting its defenses, and had fitted up luxurious quarters for themselves in their impregnable fortress. The houses of the adjacent villages and all the châteaux in the neighborhood had been methodically pillaged. The German officers had transported to the subterranean apartments of the Trou-Bricot chairs, sofas, beds, wardrobes, and even pianos. On one of these

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officers was found an extremely curious order from a German quartermaster-general, forbidding the occupants of the houses and châteaux of the neighborhood to take the furniture with them when they left. "Such things can no longer be permitted," the order gravely ran, "because, if the first occupants carry away everything they take a fancy to, nothing will be left for those who come after them."

The surrounding of the Trou-Bricot was one of the most successful manœuvres of our offensive. Throughout all this region the majority of the German batteries were surprised and taken in the height of the action, and the gunners and loaders killed before they knew what was happening. One of our regiments advanced four kilometres in two hours, taking on the way ten guns, three of 105 mm. and seven of 77 mm.

Unhappily, after midday our rate of progress began to slacken. The thick weather made it impossible for our artillery to follow

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the advance and it became increasingly difficult to establish liaisons. From the "buttes" of Souain and Tahure the enemy poured a converging fire on our troops, who were advancing over open ground. Nevertheless, they pushed forward to the foot of the hill of Tahure, where they dug themselves in. But the wire entanglements protecting the second German position were still intact, and a fresh bombardment would have been required to carry it.

It was to the north of Mesnil that the German resistance was most dogged. Our attack made us masters of a hollow called the ravine of Cuisines; but it was impossible for us to get beyond this point.

To the north of Beauséjour, however, we scored a swift and brilliant success. The successive waves of the attacking force, flinging themselves on the first lines, completely submerged them. The onrush carried some of the troops straight to the crest of Maisons de Champagne; on the way they passed

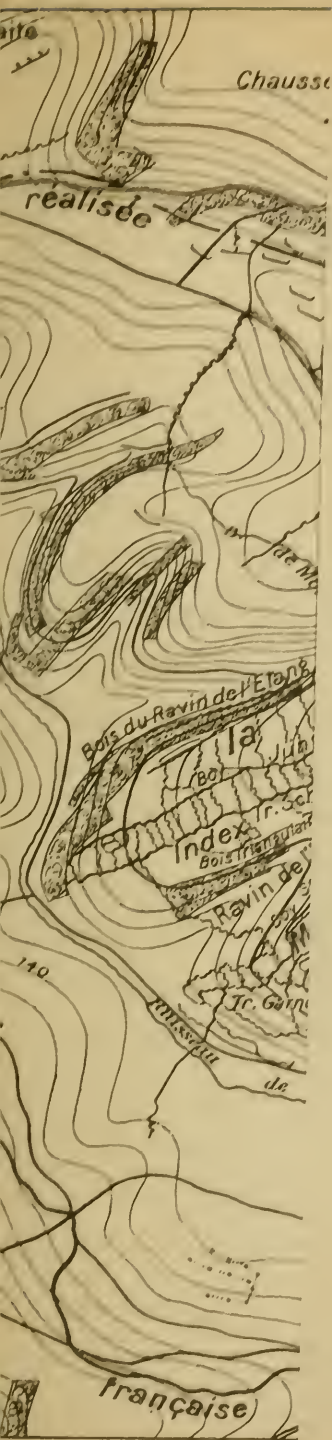
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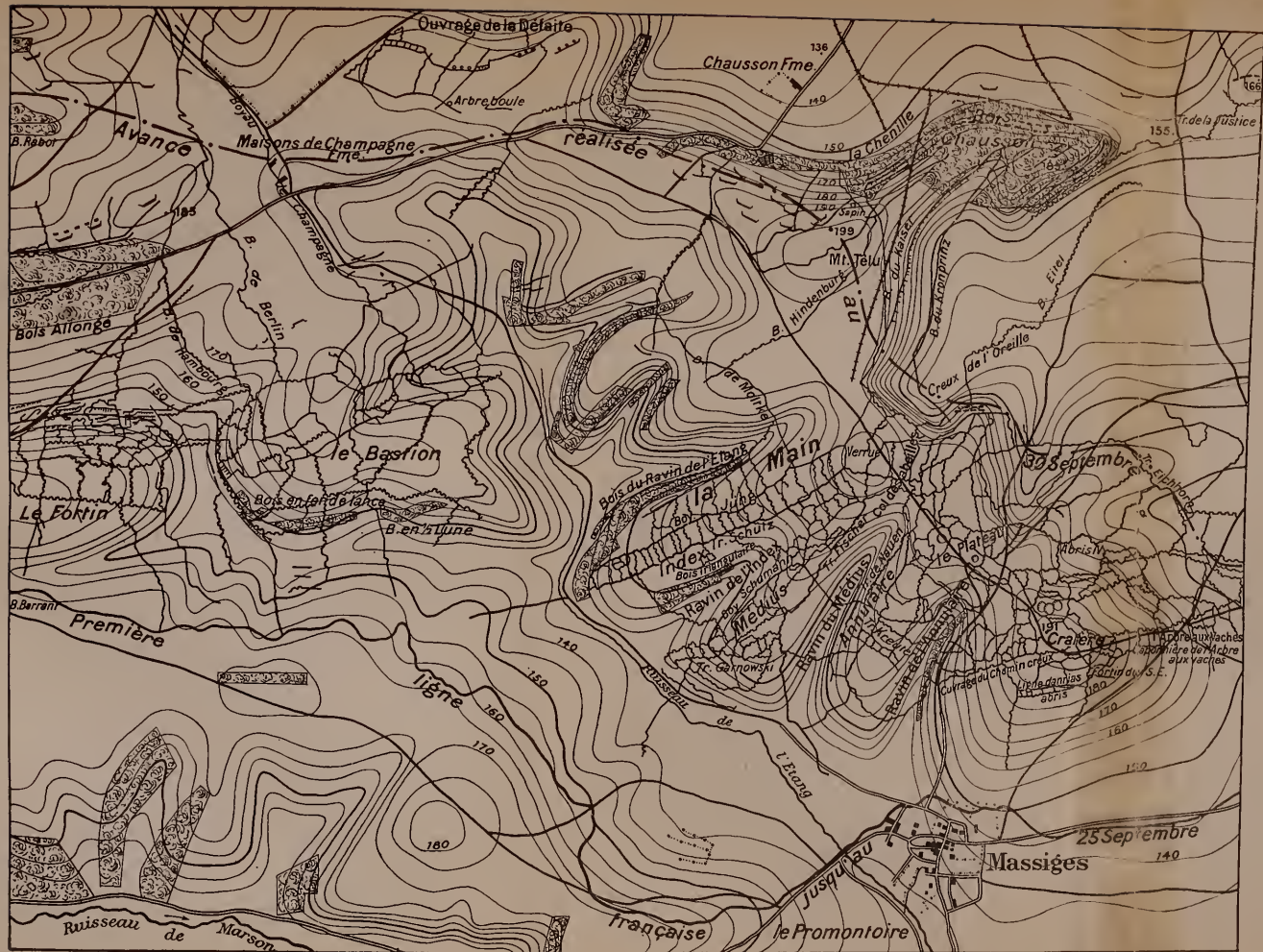
through several batteries, killing the gunners at their posts. It was in this sector that the cavalry lent an unexpected support to the infantry. Two squadrons of hussars, in spite of a violent curtain fire, had swept past our trenches and were galloping toward the German batteries to the north of Maisons de Champagne. On the way they reached a trench in which the Germans had managed to maintain themselves. The German machine-guns were instantly turned on the hussars and a few horses fell. The hussars immediately sprang to the ground and rushed at the trenches with drawn swords, giving the infantry time to rally under cover of this diversion. The resistance of the enemy was broken and six hundred prisoners were taken at this particular point.

The heights of Massiges had also been converted into what the Germans regarded as an impregnable fortress, from the summit of which they commanded all our principal positions. But in a quarter of an hour our

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infantry had scaled the height and were in possession of the German works. There followed a terrific hand-grenade fight in the communication trenches. As our bomb-throwers advanced the Germans surrendered in masses. An uninterrupted chain of bomb-throwers, like the chain of buckets at a fire, occupied the trenches and the ridges of the hill. For more than eight days the fight went on without respite, and with unexampled fury. The Germans brought up continual reinforcements. All their available troops were called up to defend the hill of Massiges, which they were resolved to hold at all costs. The German gunners dropped beside their guns, the grenadiers on their grenade-boxes. And still our troops continued slowly but steadily to advance, till finally we obtained possession of the whole crest of Massiges, maintaining ourselves there in spite of the furious counter-attacks of the enemy. The German General Staff appears to have been especially affected by the loss of this position. Ac-





MAP SHOWING THE FORMIDABLE SERIES OF GERMAN FORTIFICATIONS AND TRENCHES KNOWN AS "THE HAND OF MASSIGES."

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According to the German communiqués, it was voluntarily evacuated because our artillery fire had made it untenable. But whenever the Germans lose a position they profess to have abandoned it of their own accord; after the battle of the Marne they went so far as to describe their retreat of sixty kilometres as a strategic manoeuvre. As a matter of fact, the heights of Massiges were won from the enemy bit by bit, yard by yard, by the dauntless courage of our bomb-throwers.

Our huge attack along a front of twenty-five kilometres was supported by two others designed to cover our flanks. The task of the troops to whom this duty was allotted, and especially of those operating on the western borders of the Argonne, between Servon and the wood of La Grurie, was peculiarly difficult. It was their duty to hold in check and to immobilize as large a force of the enemy as possible, and they fulfilled their mission brilliantly and with unfaltering bravery.

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Our offensive in Champagne is universally acknowledged to have been a great tactical success. Along the whole front the first line of German works, three or four lines of trenches, the strongest centres of defense, the points of support, and the field-works were all carried. At certain points our troops even succeeded in making a breach in the second line. If these breaches were not wide enough to permit our supporting troops to pour through them, it was chiefly because the persistent bad weather made it impossible to follow up our advantage.

In spite of this, the results obtained, materially as well as morally, were extremely satisfactory.

In the first place, our tactical success had an immediate strategical result of the first importance. The Germans, roused to the great risk they had run, recalled in hot haste ten or twelve of their divisions operating on the Russian front: that is to say, a body of troops large enough to have permitted

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them to press their advance into Russian territory and perhaps obtain a decisive advantage over our allies. The fact is indisputable, and it would be hard to exaggerate its importance. The check of the German offensive in Russia coincided exactly with our victory in Champagne, and the link between the two events is very close.

For several days the Germans were in a state of great alarm. They understood that their front had very nearly been broken through. The hurried orders of their General Staff, the agitation of their troops, revealed their anxiety and apprehension.

Our advance made us master of about forty square kilometres of ground, and left in our hands an enormous number of prisoners — twenty-five thousand men, three hundred and fifty officers, one hundred and fifty guns, besides machine guns, bomb-throwers, and a large amount of other booty. Such figures are the trophies of an important victory. To measure their significance it is

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only necessary to compare them with those of some of the memorable battles which French soldiers have fought and won in the past.

At Jena, for instance, we took fifteen thousand prisoners and two hundred guns. The Prussian losses on that occasion amounted to eighteen thousand men.

At Austerlitz we took twelve thousand prisoners and one hundred and eighty-six guns, while the imperial army lost twenty-five thousand men.

For the first time since the beginning of the present war the German troops in Champagne surrendered *en masse*. Whole regiments thus disappeared completely from the German army; and for days and days, along the great highway that runs through Châlons, an uninterrupted stream of German prisoners poured in from the front.

The letters and journals found on these prisoners and taken from the dead bear witness to the extreme discouragement of the enemy. On the 30th of September a lieu-

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tenant of reserves of the Tenth Army Corps jotted down the following lines:

Yesterday sixteen of my men were killed by torpedoes. It is frightful. If only the rain would begin again, or the fog come back! But with this weather the aviators are sure to be on us again, and we shall be deluged with torpedoes and with shells from the trenches. Clear skies, how I hate you! Fog, fog, come back to help us!

The German losses were extremely heavy — it is not impossible to compute them approximately. At the beginning of September the Germans had seventy battalions on the Champagne front. Before the 25th of the month, in anticipation of our attack, they brought twenty-nine more battalions to this front, forming a total of ninety-nine; and the one hundred and fifteen thousand men composing this force were immediately thrown into action.

During the first days of the battle the

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wastage on the German side was so great that the General Staff was obliged to renew its forces by despatching to the front ninety-three new battalions. In the greater number of regiments the losses were certainly not lower than fifty per cent. Therefore it may be safely assumed that the total of German losses in Champagne amounted to one hundred and forty thousand men.

The importance which General Joffre attached to this victory is shown by the following Order of the Day, which he addressed to the army:

GENERAL HEADQUARTERS, October 3d.

The commander-in-chief desires to transmit to the troops under his command the expression of his profound satisfaction regarding the results obtained by the attacks up to the present time.

Twenty-five thousand prisoners, three hundred and fifty officers, one hundred and fifty guns, and *matériel* which it has not yet been possible to count: such are the results of a

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victory of which the fame has rung through Europe.

None of the sacrifices entailed have been vain. All who were engaged have done their part. Our present success is the surest pledge of future victory.

The commander-in-chief is proud to have under his command the finest troops that France has ever known.

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The most important result of our success in Champagne is that for the first time since the beginning of the war the Germans completely lost their initiative, and even any serious ability to react against our attack. One of their generals, Von Dittfurth, acknowledges the fact explicitly in one of his orders.

"I have the impression," he writes, "that our infantry is simply remaining on the defensive. . . . I cannot protest too energetically against such a system, which necessarily results in deadening in our troops all spirit of aggression, leaving to the enemy com-

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plete freedom of action, and subordinating our own attitude to his initiative."

Von Dittfurth was right. Up to the date of the Champagne offensive the Germans, whenever they lost any position, however insignificant, considered it a point of honor to retake what they had lost at any cost. Now for the first time, after this important victory, they seemed incapable of any serious counter-attack.

They merely attempted to gather together as large a force as they could muster — the rank and file of the regiments all in inextricable confusion — and to mass it on their second lines, which they felt to be gravely menaced. That was the limit of their effort. No serious attempt was made to recover any of the advantages gained by the French. It is impossible to lay too much stress on this fact.

In the course of this terrible "match" we see one of two adversaries receive a terrific blow without trying to return it. There

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could be no better presage for the future. It is true that the blow received has not laid the adversary low; but no one in France ever imagined that Germany, which has devoted half a century to the preparation of this war, lavishing upon the task all her wealth, her intelligence, her power of organization, and also her ruthless savagery, could be disabled by one blow. The struggle now going on is a question of patience, of energy, and of endurance. Great results, as we know, are most often obtained little by little, and as the consequence of uninterrupted effort.

What has been accomplished in Champagne by the heroism of our men and the intelligence of their chiefs is no small achievement. History will in due time record the fact.

III

TWO COLLABORATORS OF GENERAL JOFFRE

GENERAL DE CASTELNAU AND GENERAL FOCH

I. GENERAL DE CASTELNAU

IN the early days of September, 1914, and simultaneously with the battle of the Marne, the Germans made a formidable attempt to get the better of our army in Lorraine. They were determined, at no matter what price, to seize Nancy. The Kaiser came in person to Dieuze. Near by, on the frontier, a glittering regiment of white cuirassiers stood in readiness; he intended to place himself at their head and make Nancy the scene of one of those preannounced spectacular entries which, throughout this war, the god of battles has consistently denied him.

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With Nancy as a centre, and taking a radius of twenty to twenty-five kilometres, an arc traced from the banks of the Moselle, near Pont-à-Mousson, to those of the Meurthe, near Dombasle, would correspond approximately with the heights of the Grand-Couronné. This is the name given to an almost unbroken line of considerable hills which form a huge half-circle round Nancy from the Meurthe to the Moselle. These heights command striking glimpses of distant landscape. On a clear day the cathedral of Metz is clearly visible: so also is the Côte de Delme, which the Germans have strongly fortified and made into one of the important points of their lines of defense. At the foot of the hills meanders the Seille, a little tributary of the Moselle. This stream forms the frontier.

The Germans, impatient for a decision, threw themselves recklessly against the Grand-Couronné. Their attacks upon the hill of Ste.-Geneviève on the north and upon the

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Grand-Mont d'Amance at the centre were particularly violent. Entire battalions of men were sacrificed without a thought. Indeed, at that moment of the war this was the customary German method. Secure in the belief that the war would be a matter of weeks or, at most, of months, they felt no need to economize the lives of their soldiers. But, in spite of these unsparing efforts, the Grand-Couronné stood firm. The great Mont d'Amance alone received more than twenty thousand shells without material injury. The French troops holding the foot of the slopes had to defend the valley through which the main road to Nancy runs. The fate of the capital of Lorraine was in their hands. These troops were proof against every attack. They fought to the extreme limit of human endurance. The Germans, exhausted and disheartened, were forced to let go their hold and beat a retreat. Nancy was saved. On the night before their departure the enemy attempted a cruel, cowardly, and typically

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Teutonic revenge upon the city they had failed to seize. Some forty shells were dropped on Nancy from one of their long-distance batteries; but only the suburbs of the town were reached.

The splendid resistance offered by the army of Lorraine contributed directly to the victory of the Marne, and enabled us to reap the full fruit of our success. Had the army of Lorraine been shaken, had Nancy fallen, the very pivot of all our forces might have been imperilled.

In fact, the more one considers the battle of the Marne, the more clearly it shows itself as a gigantic unity, a perfectly contrived whole, where all the elements were dovetailed into each other, without the smallest gap between, where each of the great actors called upon the stage fulfilled to the exact letter the part he had to play.

The commander of the army of Lorraine and the soul of this magnificent resistance, was General de Castelnau, one of the close

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collaborators of General Joffre. Hardly was the contest over and calm restored to this portion of the line when General de Castelnau was suddenly sent to a new and hotly contested section of the battle-front. After the retreat of the Marne the first effort of the Germans was a turning movement against our left wing. Violent engagements took place in the neighborhood of Péronne and Amiens: each of the opposing armies tended to shift their forces from east to west. Here, as elsewhere, the German attacks came to the same result. They were entirely repulsed.

General de Castelnau, who had led a single army to the most brilliant success, and under conditions of the utmost difficulty, was promoted by General Joffre to the command of a group of armies. In this capacity he exercised the high control of our great offensive in Champagne in September, 1915. Here, once more, he added a new achievement to his former successes. Not long after-

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ward, when General Joffre was appointed commander-in-chief of all the armies of France, on the Balkan front as well as the French, General de Castelnau was made the chief of his General Staff. He thus finds himself the *généralissime's* right-hand man, sharing in every moment of his work.

General de Castelnau was born at St.-Affrique, in the Aveyron. Somewhat short in stature, but well-proportioned, thick-set, and solidly built, with a bronzed complexion, quick gestures, and a frank, alert expression, he is a vigorous offshoot of a race which unites southern vivacity with the sturdiness of a mountain stock: a race of hot blood and cold brain. The rough soil of the table-lands of Languedoc and Gascony has, in fact, produced a notable line of warriors. Typical of them is Montluc, a man with whom General de Castelnau presents more than one point of likeness. Montluc, too, was hard: hard on others, but harder still on himself, ardent in the cause of his service, possessed

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of an unfailing imagination, a fluent and vivid gift of language, distinguished for his prowess in the field, and no less for his power to recount the story of that prowess to the delight of his contemporaries and of posterity. The "Commentaries" of Montluc are certainly among the books to which, in the course of this war, many Frenchmen, and many who are not French, must most willingly have returned. It is good to repeat the proud and splendid words with which those "Commentaries" open: "As there are certain lands wherein some fruits do copiously abound, that elsewhere rarely flourish, so also, in infinite number, does our Gascony customarily bear great and valiant captains as a fruit proper and natural to itself." Languedoc's fruitfulness in military leaders was far from exhausting itself in Montluc. In the wars of the Empire alone, Murat, Bessières, Marbot — all men of Gascon birth — stand in the very foreground of the picture.

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General de Castelnau's family had long been settled in the Rouergue, at the foot of the Causses. His father, a lawyer of great ability, well-known and greatly esteemed in those parts, was for many years the mayor of St.-Affrique. He had three sons: the eldest entered the Polytechnic School and is now a brilliant engineer; the second followed his father's profession and became deputy for the Aveyron; the third, who chose the profession of arms, is Édouard de Castelnau, our general. He was born in 1851 and is now sixty-five years of age.

We have here a perfect type of an old French bourgeois family. In it, to the full, are seen the finest and strongest qualities of our race: its sense of duty, its love of industry, its spirit of sacrifice. General de Castelnau is the father of ten children. Since the beginning of the war three have been killed—two in the earliest months of the fighting, the third at the time of the French offensive of September, 1915. In spite of these heavy

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losses, he has pursued his great task without allowing himself a single moment's distraction from the great cause intrusted to him. Families like these — and they are more numerous than foreigners usually suppose — form the backbone of our nation: it is they who have done most to save France.

The foreigner, however intelligent and discerning, has seldom any opportunity of becoming acquainted with people of this type. It is not only the idle and unobservant tourist who comes to spend a few weeks in Paris, treating it as the best watering-place in the world, and seeking, rigorously and exclusively, for just those distractions and those impressions which a watering-place can give, to whom families of this kind are unknown. Even those who come frequently to France, or establish themselves there, have the utmost difficulty in obtaining a deeper insight into French life than Paris society gives. Paris society is in no sense typical of France; and in a great crisis, such as war, it is an-

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other France that is suddenly disclosed — the true France, unknown and unsuspected. It is no wonder that many who have never known this France are amazed at the sudden revelation.

Édouard de Castelnau began his education in the Jesuit college of his native town. At the age of eighteen he passed into the military school of St.-Cyr, where French cavalry and infantry officers receive their training. This was in 1869. A year later the Franco-German War broke out. The young men of St.-Cyr, whether of senior or junior standing, were immediately given commissions as second lieutenants and distributed among the regiments. Second Lieutenant de Castelnau served through the whole of this disastrous campaign. It was a terrible first experience of life, which could not but leave its impress on the minds of the young men who underwent it.

In spite of all the deficiencies in our military preparations, our troops came, no less

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than three or four times, within an inch — nay, within a hair's breadth — of routing the German armies. Then, as always, the moral and military qualities of the race were wonderful. It was the higher command which was inadequate. Under different leaders this or that disastrous defeat would, without a doubt, have been changed into a brilliant victory, and Prussia would ultimately have been beaten. Unhappily, our leaders were what they were, and Germany came out of the war a victorious and immensely aggrandized power.

Young de Castelnau, in the course of this campaign, was promoted, first to the rank of lieutenant, and then to that of captain. For him, as for all who served with him, there was only one task: to set about reorganizing the military power which had been shattered in this disaster and to give France an army.

On this patriotic labor, this national reconstruction, all Castelnau's efforts were hence-

forth concentrated. His military life had begun with an unsuccessful war with Germany; it is crowned by another German war from which we have every assurance of coming out victorious. The interval between these two wars — a period of forty-four years of hard study and hard thinking — was devoted by him, and by our other chiefs, to one single problem — that of fitting our army for a conflict which each one of them, in spite of all the illusions of pacifists and politicians, knew in his heart to be inevitable. Forty-four years concentrated upon a single purpose gives a wonderfully harmonious unity. — *tenor vitæ*, the Romans called it — to a human life. And a great and deeply satisfying reward for their efforts and their labors has come to the men who, like Joffre and Castelnau, have had but one thought all their lives — to prepare the army of France for victory.

Castelnau mounted the successive grades of a military career and at each stage re-

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ceived the recognition due to him. He passed into the Ecole de Guerre, was promoted to a divisional staff, to the staff of an army corps, and thence to the Great General Staff, from time to time, at each of these stages, putting in his periods of command with the troops.

It was in 1906 that he became general, and from that moment his rise was very rapid. When, in 1913, General Joffre was designated as commander-in-chief of the armies in the field in case of war, he lost no time in calling General de Castelnau to his side as chief of staff. The confidence which General Joffre reposes in him is unbounded. The two great chiefs have for long been accustomed to work together and with one accord, and in continuous collaboration they studied one by one all the difficult problems of a future war. This collaboration, begun and continued in times of peace, was to become closer still upon the field of battle, where it has

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come to fruition. After eighteen months of war we find General de Castelnau acting as second to the *généralissime*, living and working beside him, and placing his whole intelligence and his whole activity at the service of his great chief.

II. GENERAL FOCH

At the end of August, 1914, our great retreat was in progress. It was the eve of the battle of the Marne. The Tenth Division was retreating from the northeast of Charleville, on the Belgian frontier, in the direction of Rethel and Rheims, covering the left wing of the fourth army. This retreat, however, did not prevent it from dealing some heavy thrusts at the enemy. On August 28th, near Signy-l'Abbaye, it overthrew an entire corps of Saxons forming part of Von Hausen's army, and, in spite of a decided inferiority in numbers, won an incontestable victory in the field. Nevertheless, in obedience to general orders, it became necessary

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in the middle of the night to turn and continue the retreat. But our soldiers retained a very clear consciousness of having just beaten the Germans; and, in spite of this backward movement, their tone and confidence were unimpaired.

Some days later at Bertoncourt, near Rethel, they once more got the better of the German invader. Two battalions of colonial infantry stormed this village at the point of the bayonet. The Saxons who occupied it had descended to the unspeakable foul play of hiding behind a screen of civilians, to shield themselves from the rifle-fire of our troops. This fact is attested in official documents by a hundred depositions each more crushing than the last.

On August 30th — it was a morning of dog-day heat — a general was walking to and fro in front of the Hôtel de Ville in the market-place of Attigny on the Aisne, a small town a little above Rethel. His manner was abrupt and jerky; his air was anxious, his

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expression grave. From time to time a staff-officer would arrive bringing him information and presenting him with reports. He would snatch each paper that was brought to him, cast a rapid eye over it, and resume his walk. A number of German prisoners were marched past, marshalled by our soldiers with fixed bayonets. They were a wretched band, bare-headed, dishevelled, panting, covered with dust and sweat. The general hardly turned his eyes in their direction. The road and the market-place were packed with an agitated throng. Batteries, munition sections, endless convoys, succeeded one another without a pause. The neighboring guns grew louder and louder, as if the battle were drawing nearer. A regiment passed. One of the men noticed the general and nudged his companion: "Look at the boss," he said. "I shouldn't care to tackle him to-day."

"The boss" (*le patron*) was General Foch. He had just assumed command of a new army, expressly created for his control.

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The placing of Foch's army in the centre of our line, and of Manoury's army near Paris, were two master-strokes of General Joffre, admirably carried out by his subordinates — two strokes in which our whole victory on the Marne was already implied. The German menace in Belgium was becoming every moment graver and more pronounced; our left army and the British force were giving way. A new and rapid distribution of our forces was imperative. Some of our army corps were therefore passed from east to west. In the Paris sector an army under the command of General Manoury was created behind the intrenched camp, ready at a given moment to hurl itself on Von Kluck and threaten to envelop his troops. Similarly, in the centre, between our fourth and fifth armies, a new army was formed and intrusted to General Foch, who, in Lorraine, had brilliantly distinguished himself in command of one of our finest corps — the Twentieth, of Nancy.

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Events were not slow in proving the wisdom and insight of the measures taken by General Joffre in the full agitation of retreat. A few days later the retreat was at an end and the battle of the Marne had begun.

The Germans recognized the deadly threat upon their left, where Von Kluck, sharply attacked by Manoury, was compelled to expose himself to two fronts at a time. They attempted to get out of the danger by a vigorous offensive directed on our centre. The Prussian Guard, another of their crack corps, made a violent attack in the neighborhood of Fère-Champenoise and the marshes of St.-Gond. It was at this point that General Foch was situated. So spirited was the onslaught of the Germans that they succeeded in shaking part of Foch's troops. His entire right was driven back to the south of Fère-Champenoise. His army no longer lined up horizontally with our general front; it had become a vertical line, an elbow.

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Happily, the divisions on his left held firm. At Mondement, at the southern extremity of the marshes of St.-Gond, they clung to their positions and offered a dogged and heroic resistance.

But, though the right of this army gave way, the general in command of it, Foch, did not bend for an instant. Energy, tenacity, resistance are his conspicuous qualities. Victory is above all things a question of will; and it was by sheer force of will that victory was destined to be wrested from the enemy's hands. The general communicated his confidence to all around him. The word of command was to hold on; to hold on whatever happened and at whatever price. And this was not enough. He achieved far more: he attacked. He accomplished a *tour de force*, almost a miracle: with an army three-fourths defeated he passed to the offensive.

A general who had been placed under Foch's command came to report that his men were tired out: his troops were at the

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end of their tether. The rebuff was sharp: "Tired out!" replied the general. "So are the Germans. You are to attack."

Yet there was a moment, during the last two days of the great battle, when General Foch's position was highly critical. One of his army corps and a reserve division were beaten back beyond Fère-Champenoise. On his left, which up to now had held firm, the Germans after a terrible attack succeeded in occupying the Château de Mondement. At nightfall, on the evening of the 8th, the great plain, seen from the height of the cliff of Broye, presented a prodigious spectacle—a veritable vision of the Apocalypse. Cloud upon cloud of gleaming red and bronze rolled over it; the last rays of the sun lit up the storms of dust raised by the guns and by the great host of horse and foot; the bursting shells flashed incessantly; and over the whole scene rose the flames of mighty conflagrations. The Germans had only to reach a little beyond Mondement to become imme-

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diate masters of the entire cliff, from the summit of which their heavy artillery could blast our forces in the plain unhindered and turn our retreat into a rout. General Foch demanded a final effort of heroism from his sorely tried army, and the army answered to his call. The Château of Mondement, which the Germans had just seized, was retaken by our troops after three successive attacks. The last of these, more violent than the rest, was made at nightfall with the help of two guns daringly moved up to within four hundred yards in order to shell the defenders of the place. At the most critical moment of the conflict General Foch improvised and executed an amazingly skilful manoeuvre to which our final victory was due. The Germans had driven themselves into our army like a wedge; their front took the form of an elbow. General Foch was inspired to turn to our own advantage a position which appeared wholly favorable to the enemy. He slipped one of his divi-

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sions abruptly from left to right, in such a way as to throw it suddenly upon the German flank. The movement took the enemy by surprise. On a smaller scale it was the same skilful manœuvre as that by which General Joffre threw Manoury's army on the flank of Von Kluck. In each case the result was admirable. The two manœuvres were the deciding cause of the German retreat and won us the victory of the Marne.

Every frontal attack which the Germans had attempted had completely failed. They were gravely menaced on their flank, their troops were totally exhausted, their munitions at an end. This was the situation which faced the German Général Staff. They recognized that to go on was to run the risk of a complete disaster. The Kaiser in person signed with his own hand the memorable order to retreat. France and its capital were saved.

To this brilliant end General Foch had largely contributed. General Joffre recog-

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nized the fact a few days later, in the congratulations which his *ordre du jour* offered to his brilliant collaborator.

Three weeks passed. The Germans, having failed to take Paris or destroy the French army, now tried to outflank us on their right. They pushed their forces farther and farther toward Amiens and Arras. But their stroke was parried; and they found us ready with an answer. Our army corps were moved from right to left and from east to west. These two strategic movements, or "oquades," on the French and German sides developed parallel to one another. The Germans were as incapable here as they had been elsewhere of making the least advance or gain. The two armies extended their fronts more and more to the north. They climbed toward Lille and the Yser. This is the phase which has been called "the race for the sea." And when at length the North Sea was reached at Nieuport the two adversaries must needs come to a halt.

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Just before this the Germans, through their crushing superiority in heavy artillery, were enabled to seize Antwerp. The little Belgian army made a fortunate escape toward Ghent and Furnes. They were enabled to do this by the heroic resistance of the French naval brigade under the command of Admiral Ronarc'h, which, step by step, contested the enemy's advance. The English army began to move northward toward Ypres from the positions on the banks of the Aisne which it had occupied since the battle of the Marne. The Germans thereupon decided to make a terrific effort to overturn the English army, the Belgian army, and the French troops which lay between them. This was the signal for the battle of the Yser.

The violence of that battle and the fury of the German assaults can never be described. The Kaiser, after failing to take Paris, must have his revenge, and the revenge must be dazzling. He decided that

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at any cost Calais must be his. Now was the moment when all Germany abandoned itself to a hatred of England that amounted to frenzy. Lissauer had just composed that amazing and monstrous song, destined surely to remain in human history as a typical example of the degree of aberration and criminal folly to which a self-infatuated people can attain.

Those who ruled the counsels of Germany were convinced that if Calais could be reached their strength in submarines would enable them to establish a close blockade against England, isolate her, and hold her at their mercy. The Kaiser, wishing to inflame the fury of his troops and to obtain from them a superhuman effort of courage and energy came in person to take part in the attack which he believed would prove decisive. He established himself at Roulers; he passed his troops in review and exalted their enthusiasm. The Germans, who desired to break through at whatever cost, attacked in great

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masses, as though with the stroke of a club. On one day they threw no less than seven divisions, one upon the other, against the French and English lines. The English, left to themselves, must have bent before this terrific onslaught. It was absolutely necessary to support them. Some of our best army corps were abruptly taken from certain parts of our front, sent in rapid succession by rail, and thrown upon the Yser. It was a human dike raised to stay the German inundation.

These strategic movements, far superior in scale to anything imagined before the present war, were carried out with great rapidity and perfect order. Yet one need only cast an eye on the map to realize that this concentration of forces upon the Yser involved far greater difficulties on our side than on the enemy's. The front from the North Sea to the Vosges makes almost a right angle, running north and south to Compiègne, and afterward east and west.

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The Germans are within the angle; we outside it. It follows that they are more readily able than ourselves to send rapid reinforcements to one or other of their wings.

In the first days of October General Foch, who directed his army in the centre of the general line, had been transferred to our left wing and given a far more important command. All our armies of the north were placed at his orders. He had, moreover, the delicate task of achieving a complete unity and co-ordination of effort with the English and Belgian armies. He was, in short, the commander-in-chief of all the troops which resisted the German onslaught on the Yser: a heavy task which was once again to yield him a brilliant success.

The battle opened. The Germans called up continual reserves and forced the pace of their attack. But General Foch's confidence remained unbroken: it communicated itself to all who came near him. As each battalion arrived it was thrown into the

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furnace. Not a day, not an hour, could be lost. Every gap had to be filled, and reinforcements flung incessantly to strengthen our tottering line.

The whole flat region between the Yser and the sea is typical of the Low Countries: water, water encroaching and submerging, is everywhere. Scratch the soil and water appears. It is a fat and fertile country, saturated and oozing with humidity, blankly monotonous to look upon. Before the war a dense population crowded this rich land of Flanders. How much more crowded was it then, when through every village and hamlet the stream of Belgian refugees had overflowed in thousands! And where should room be found for all these army corps of French soldiers arriving one after the other, ceaselessly? It was lucky that these men and their officers were the easiest and most good-natured in the world. And, after all, the human race is capable of infinite compression.

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Our troops did not limit themselves to the defensive. From time to time they passed to the counter-attack with great spirit. They attempted to seize the Château of Dixmude in order to gain the bridge-head which we hold at that point. It was a dark and gloomy winter's day, such as is frequent in that region, with a thick mist and a depressing, sooty sky. Quite near us this foggy atmosphere was cleft by the forked fire of bursting shells, for here at the bridge of Dixmude the Germans were scarcely a thousand yards away.

From Nieuport to Thann, from the North Sea to the Vosges, many cities have been destroyed in the course of this war. But Dixmude endured the heaviest bombardment that a town can suffer. There is not a house unstruck, not a road that has not been pitted by shells. And what pits they are! One of them measured eight yards in diameter, and three and a half yards in depth. A carriage and horses, a whole section of

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infantry, could be hidden in it. Indescribably melancholy, in the dismal winter twilight, are the roads and squares of the little town where the tempest of war has raged. It is an empty city, overtaken by death.

When one thinks of the battle of the Yser, the violence of the attacks which the Germans renewed week after week, their unceasing efforts, their reckless sacrifice of human life, one wonders how any resistance was possible. Our battalions were hardly out of the train before they were thrown into the thick of the fighting; the country was unknown to them; their trenches, hastily contrived, were far from perfect; night and day they struggled in the mud. Yet, in spite of all, they held firm. At every point the German thrust was checked.

The same qualities of endurance and tenacity, the same heroism which won for us the battle of the Marne, secured for General Foch and the excellent troops he commanded this successful issue on the Yser. General

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Foch's attitude during these hard days must have recalled to many some words which he spoke at the Ecole de Guerre with all the emphasis of a vigorous faith. He quoted a phrase of Joseph de Maistre: "A lost battle is a battle one believes oneself to have lost; in a material sense no battle can be lost." And he added: "A battle, then, can only be lost morally. But, if so, it is also morally that a battle is won." One might add to this aphorism another: A battle won is a battle in which you refuse to acknowledge defeat.

The conduct of General Foch on the Yser and in the region of Fère-Champenoise corresponded exactly with his professions in the Ecole de Guerre. For Foch, before putting the art of war into practice on the field of battle, had already taught it in his lectures and published works. His is the deeply interesting case of a famous professor of strategy called by the turn of events to give his theories and his teaching a living application. It is

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worth while to examine how this came about. How, and in what circumstances, were the theories fitted to the facts?

General Foch was born in 1851, the son of a civil servant at Tarbes. He is thus an exact contemporary of General de Castelnau and General Joffre. As soon as he entered college his teacher in mathematics declared: "His genius is for geometry; he has the makings of a polytechnician." And, in fact, General Foch, making good this prediction, entered the Ecole Polytechnique, from which, in due course, he graduated as an artilleryman. While holding the rank of lieutenant-colonel, he was appointed professor in strategy and general tactics at the Ecole de Guerre. Ten years later, after holding commands in various arms, he was made director of this same school.

He has condensed the drift of his teaching into two books now celebrated, "The Principles of War" and "The Conduct of War." Here may be found his whole theory of war

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illustrated with a prodigal abundance of facts and instances. He starts with the principle that it is an absolute mistake, in war, to take nothing but the material factors into account. Over and above the "earthly" element of military art remains what Napoleon called the "divine" element. Hence war is not an exact science, but a terrific and passionate drama, where man with his moral and physical faculties is cast for the principal part.

Instruction in war is, however, necessary, because for most men the realities of the battle-field are not favorable to inspiration. Most often they have a paralyzing effect. Under fire it is all one can do to carry out what one has learned, to act up to the knowledge which a long and difficult training has built up. The smallest success in military action presupposes long preparation in thought and study. Genius is not universal, and in its absence a general can rise to the height of his task only by method and by science.

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The function of the long military education is to give officers the right *reflex actions* on the field of battle. But these are only to be acquired by sustained and constant effort.

“Modern war,” says General Foch, “is a national war.” The end it sets itself is not the conquest or maintenance of a province but the defense or propagation of principles: spiritual ends and philosophical ideas. It brings into play the feelings and passions of every soldier. When Bonaparte in his famous proclamation to the army of Italy based his appeal on those passions he inaugurated a new era in war.

On the subject of the intellectual discipline of commanders General Foch has written several pages which rank among the best that the ideal of military duty has ever inspired. “In war, except for the commander-in-chief, every officer is a subordinate. Every one of them, in seeking to command must seek to obey. But obedience is a difficult art. Many circumstances — to say nothing

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of the enemy — interfere with the execution of the order received. To conquer these circumstances demands a mental discipline that is intelligent and alert. A commander, then, should first and foremost be a man of character, but he should also be capable of the comprehension and resource necessary for obedience. . . . Discipline involves a mental activity — an activity of reflection: it is not a matter of immobility, like the silence of the ranks. Discipline, in a commander, does not mean merely the execution of orders within convenient, just, rational, or even possible limits. It means a frank entry into the thoughts and intentions of whoever is in supreme command, and the adoption of every possible means to satisfy them. Discipline does not mean a silent acquiescence that limits itself to whatever can be undertaken without compromising oneself; it is not the art of avoiding responsibilities. It is the art of acting in the spirit of a given order, and calls us, to that end, to find in

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our intelligence a means of executing the order, and in our character the energy to take the necessary risks."

General Foch illustrates these definitions by the case of General de Failly, who on the 4th and 6th of August, 1870, was either unable or unwilling to carry out his orders to go first to Bitche and then to Reichshoffen, with the result that he failed to take part in the battle where the army of Alsace was overwhelmed, and where his presence would assuredly have changed the issue. And General Foch continues: "At a time like ours, which believes itself able to neglect ideal elements, which pretends to live realistically, rationally, positively, and to avoid abstractions, when everything is reduced to terms of science and to a more or less ingeniously contrived empiricism, we are left with but one resource against error and disaster. That resource — and it is both sure and fertile in results — lies in abandoning ourselves to the service of two abstractions of a moral

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order, duty and discipline. And this service, if it is to lead to success, must be backed up by science and good sense." Such are the governing ideas of General Foch.

In daily life the general is a man of few words. He speaks with mathematical conciseness, and his conversation is always full of vigor. Cold, calm, and self-possessed, he is conspicuous for just the qualities which the English most prize. Add to these his close knowledge of the English army, along with his keen sense of the national temperament and character, and we shall easily comprehend the influence he exerts over every Englishman who comes in contact with him. To this influence is due in large measure the perfect understanding and cohesion which has existed between the French and English armies from the very beginning of the war. It was, indeed, far from being the simplest of tasks to insure this cohesion. Great delicacy and tact were obviously called for. General Foch, by the force of character

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which every Englishman recognizes in him, achieved it without the smallest difficulty.

Superficially, at any rate, the trench warfare in which the two armies have now been so long rooted is very different from the kind of war that General Foch has written of and taught. It was open to the Germans, after the battle of the Marne, to continue the free-moving warfare from which alone rapid and decisive results can be obtained. They preferred to dig themselves in. This course, it is true, has enabled them thus far to hold firm. But by this course, it is no less true, they are renouncing the possibility of beating us, of putting us once for all out of action. Trench warfare for them was not, and can never be, more than a *pis-aller*. The enemy well know that this state of siege, by its very nature, and in proportion to its length, must necessarily work out to their disadvantage, since Germany, cut off as it is from all use of the sea, plays the part of the besieged, while France and England are

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the besiegers. Consequently, the mere fact that the Germans have chosen or accepted this kind of war upon the western front is in itself an admission of impotence and defeat.

Moreover, whether we fight in trenches or in the open, it is still by the moral qualities of the belligerents that victory will finally be decided. From this point of view we have no cause for uneasiness, for the moral superiority is ours. And here the confidence of General Foch in the ultimate issue is unequalled. To him, as to General de Castelnau, the war has brought heavy private sorrows. His son and his son-in-law were killed in the earliest months. He has said nothing of his own grief, but has given an example to all by redoubling his efforts and his perseverance.

In this war battles, which used to be a matter of hours or of days, are now prolonged to months and years. Many on-lookers are so struck by the paradox of this

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slow development that they are tempted to disbelieve in any final decision or rupture of the equilibrium. But we, who live among the actors in the drama, have, on the contrary, a mathematical certainty that the rupture will come and that it will come in our favor, and that on an enfeebled Germany the Allies by a common effort will one day deliver their united stroke.

IV

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11th-15th January, 1915.

FOR the last ten days our army corps, tired out by the hard fighting which we have had in Flanders, on the borders of the Yser and in the region around Ypres, is resting between Montdidier and Amiens.

Accustomed as we are to the gray mud of Flanders, this dry, clean, smiling country on the confines of Picardy and the Ile-de-France seems to us paradise.

There are then really villages which are not shelled every day, houses which have not been knocked to pieces by big guns, good beds in which one may sleep for hours almost out of sound of the cannon! And above all, there are our own French roads, wide and well made, where two or three carriages may go abreast without risk of

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collision or overturning. I think perhaps we French are prouder of our good roads than of anything else.

We are rather afraid, however, that our time for rest will not be long.

But to what point on the front will they "apply" us? Near Rheims, where we have been already, or in the region around Châlons, or in Alsace? One guess is as good as another, and of what use is it to rack one's brain when it is so simple just to wait? Some of these days or nights a telegram will come to settle the question. . . .

The telegram is here, and we are to be sent to the —th Army in the Argonne. The entrainment of the troops is to begin at once. Some of us are to make the journey by motor, and I am to go among the first, to get our encampment ready.

Our route is by Compiègne, Villers-Cotterets, Châlons, Ste.-Meneshould, and I am told that our temporary camp is to be a little to the north of Revigny. This is the

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region which the Kronprinz has been "working," and his army deserves especial mention for the accomplished way in which it sets fire to villages and loots private property. In one house which I saw, the most considerable in the village, absolutely nothing had been left except the heaviest pieces of furniture. In this place our men were on the heels of the Germans, who, therefore, did not have time to burn down the houses as they did at Sommeilles, Sermaize, Clermont and almost all the villages of the countryside, although they had the same amiable intentions here also. During their retreat the mayor was arrested and kept a prisoner in the mairie by a guard with fixed bayonets, being told that "To-morrow morning when our men have all got out, you will be shot and your village burned to the ground." Luckily our soldiers arrived during the night, so the commune and its chief magistrate were saved.

The position of our corps will extend from

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the Aisne to a point somewhat above Servon, and our job is to defend a line which divides the wood of La Grurie and stretches beyond Four-de-Paris. We shall be in the midst of the forest of Argonne.

I am going ahead to see about our halting-places. It snowed last night, the country is all white, and the roads in very bad condition.

Ste.-Meneshould.—This town fairly swarms with troops. I made a short halt at the Hôtel de Metz, an old inn on the main road between Metz and Paris, formerly in great repute; the ample kitchen, with its innumerable copper vessels, evoked a vision of the postmasters and postilions of a time when travelling, if laborious, was also leisurely.

We went down the valley of the Aisne as far as La Neuville-au-Pont. It is a commonplace village enough, but the main door of the church is charming, and it has a delicate Renaissance façade, one of those exquisite

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jewels which one is surprised and enchanted to find even in the remotest corners of provincial France.

The front which we hold starts from the Aisne, at the ford of Melzicourt, a little farther up than Servon, and at first it goes straight toward the east, crossing the road from Servon to Vienne-le-Château, and then strikes into the wood of La Grurie, going in a wavy line with ins and outs, as far as the Fontaine-aux-Charmes, which is in the heart of the wood. From there it bends southward, crossing the brook which runs from the Fontaine-aux-Charmes about a kilometre from La Harazée, where it makes another elbow. Then it turns again toward the south until it is only three hundred metres from Four-de-Paris, and from there it goes west into the Bolante wood. With its countless salients and indentations this line is uncomfortably like the teeth of a saw, which is precisely what is going to make it so hard to hold.

The officers of the corps which we have

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come to relieve have given us any amount of information about our new sector, which may be summed up as: "You will have a stiff job; the troops you are facing are splendidly equipped for this sort of fighting, they are in fine spirits because they have had some success, and they mean to push on, no matter how many men they lose."

The corps in front of us is the Sixteenth from Metz, one of the finest and best drilled in the whole German army. We had to do with the Prussian Guard at the marshes of St.-Gond, during the battle of the Marne, and a little later before Rheims, and we also met the Fifteenth Corps from Strasburg in the Ypres region: this last corps and that of Metz are in many respects even better than the Guard. Our friends also told us that the general in command of the Sixteenth Corps is Von Mudra, an engineer, very strong on making mines, who has with him a number of sappers and mine-layers. Every ten days or so an attack is made on one or other

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of our sectors, which is materially helped by skilfully prepared mines.

This is the news which we get from the men who have lived here for the past four months. It does seem likely that our job will not be altogether an easy one.

As soon as I could get a couple of hours to myself, I went to see General Gouraud, who was wounded a short time ago and is not far from here.

The road from Ste.-Menehould to Clermont by Les Islettes is enchanting. It runs through the breadth of the great forest, and from the top of a hill, before one begins to go down toward the hollow of the Biesme, there is a wide and noble view over the rounded flanks of the Argonne, with woods, and still more woods as far as one can see.

I found General Gouraud all alone, in very attractive quarters, half château, half farmhouse. Almost every village in the Argonne has one of these houses of the better sort, which in most cases still belong to the de-

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scendants of the master glass-workers who built them.

The general was hit by a bullet during a very hard fight in which his division was engaged last month, but by great good luck the ball passed between his arm and his body, grazing two arteries without touching either. It was one of those extraordinary chances which fortune reserves for the favorites on whom she has set her seal, and who are destined for great ends.

Although he still has some fever, and the surgeons are obliged from time to time to "hack at" him, as he calls it, the general has not been willing to give up his command. He also is facing an adversary who gives him little chance to rest. The Germans make one attack after another, but are being held in check until such time as they can be repulsed.

What clear, masterful eyes the general has, and what a fine soldierly head! As I left him I thought of what was said of one

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of Napoleon's great generals: "Merely to look at him made men brave."

A little snow fell yesterday, and there was frost last night. This morning it is clear with bright sunshine. We started on horseback from La Neuville in the direction of La Harazée. After passing Moiremont, the road goes down, skirting the forest, to Vienne-la-Ville, in the valley of the Aisne. Fifteen hundred metres farther, we left this valley for that of the Biesme, which cuts across the forest of Argonne, first from north to south, then from east to west. Vienne-le-Château comes next, a picturesque mountain village among thick trees. The little river runs boiling through it, and perched on a rock high above is the old castle which dominates the valley. This is one of the famous "passes of the Argonne." Another kilometre brought us to La Harazée, and from there we came back, cutting straight across the forest. There are many paths and

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trails, but outside of them the undergrowth is so thick that it would be almost impossible to force a way through it. The dampness of this region is proverbial. Springs gush down all the slopes, and the heavy clay soil allows no water to run off, so the roads soon become almost impassable. The men splash and slip about, often going in up to their ankles, and if they are to be moved from one place to another it is absolutely necessary to make a solid path by laying down round billets of wood, one against another. A trench is scarcely dug before it is three-quarters full of water, and the men have to bale it out with pails and shovels, or even with their tin plates and mess-bowls, as if it were a leaky boat.

That is the sort of place in which they have been fighting desperately, day and night, month in and month out.

In some parts of the forest the firing has been so severe and prolonged that the trees are cut to pieces; the branches have been

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hacked off one after another, until what is left of them suggests the stumps of human limbs.

The narrow valley of the Biesme makes a deep cleft in the Argonne, almost like an excavation, and it is by no means the only one. On all sides and in every direction these deep ravines with steep sides, which the people of the country call "barribans," are insurmountable obstacles to any one wishing to cross the forest except by certain paths.

January 19th.—We have been here six days, and to-day the Germans made three attacks on our positions. In the western sector a big *minenwerfer* exploded in our trenches, knocking them about badly, whereupon one of the enemy's columns rushed forward against our first line, and managed to get a foothold in the sector of one of our companies. As soon as that happened our

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reserve company came to the rescue, and took back all the lost ground except in two places. After dinner we went at it again, and this time got back all the trench, into which the Germans had already brought a number of bags of cement, in order to lose no time in consolidating the position which they thought they had taken from us.

In the sector to the right, the Germans exploded two mines in front of the parapet of one of our trenches, at a point known as the salient of Marie-Thérèse, but our men instantly filled up the great funnel-like hollows, and our sappers made short work of putting the position back as it had been before. At six o'clock in the afternoon there was yet another attack on our front at Fontaine-aux-Charmes. Our infantry fire and the curtain fire of the artillery made the Germans stop short in their first advance, but they came on again throwing hand-grenades and bombs and got as far as our trenches. Then the fighting became hand

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to hand and they were pushed back, definitely this time.

This afternoon, near Moiremont, our general reviewed a battalion which was on its way back from the fighting line. The companies were all full, and the appearance of the men entirely satisfactory. A number of them were questioned, and they all answered most cheerfully. They said the food was still very good and they had wine every day. One of the captains said to me: "The men have stopped asking each other how long the war is likely to last, as they did a couple of months ago. They feel sure now that it will be long, and they have made up their minds to it."

January 20th.—Two German aviators have had to come down within our lines because their gasoline gave out. One of the pilots was a very intelligent captain, just out of the War Academy; there was another officer and two non-commissioned officers. Curiously enough—although it is per-

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fectly natural if one thinks about it—the mental attitude of these men was in an inverse ratio to their standing and intelligence. The non-commissioned officers believed implicitly all the stories with which their government and the Teutonic press feed the popular credulity; the Russians, for instance, were soon to be entirely crushed, and then Hindenburg would come back with his armies, and France would be crushed in her turn. The other officer was somewhat less confident, but the captain was the least confident of them all. He did not say much while he was being officially questioned, but he was less reserved when we were talking familiarly upon various subjects. Some one said to him that no doubt the German General Staff would soon start some great offensive against us, to which he answered at once: “Bah! what good would that do?” Again somebody said that the Sixteenth Corps, which was opposing us, was presumably very tired and should be replaced, and his answer to that was: “Replace it! but with

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what?" We spoke afterward of the battle of the Marne, and his opinion about it was most interesting.

Because of our rapid retreat the Germans thought we were beaten, routed, and practically annihilated; our sudden halt, and our rapid offensive when the great battle began, fairly stunned them. It seemed to the captain perfectly natural and logical that Von Kluck should have made his movement toward the southeast, in order to attack our forces, instead of going on straight to Paris. It was important to put an end to our army by dealing it a paralyzing blow. After that Paris would fall to him whenever he chose to take it. But what really happened was that the army which was believed to be in disorderly retreat turned at the time appointed by its leaders and beat the Germans. When any of them are sincere they own that they cannot get over the stupefaction into which they were plunged—the reason being that they never have understood and never will understand the

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temperament and psychology of any nation except their own, and that of the French nation least of all.

One of our lieutenants of engineers was killed to-day. During their last attack the Germans, as soon as they had broken into our trench, immediately began to make a communication trench leading to their own. The lieutenant had started off early to put his sappers at work; at the end of this communication trench he suddenly came face to face with a German trooper, who shot him dead. The trenches here, as on many other points of our line, form such a complicated labyrinth that even the men who know them best often lose their way. Germans and French are only a few metres apart, and it happens frequently that they come up against each other without the least warning.

January 22d.—Another very heavy attack, as if to prove to us that the Argonne

deserves its evil reputation. It was like all the other German attacks here, very carefully prepared and carried out with specially adapted arms, perfect technic, and intelligent organization. To the north of the fountain of La Mitte, our line juts out into a sharp angle, which goes by the name of the Marie-Thérèse salient. Although I have made various investigations, I have never been able to find out why it is so called—the most usual explanation is that it is near the house of a gamekeeper who had a daughter of that name. I give the explanation for what it is worth. The first troops that came into this region, after the battle of the Marne, gave to the works they made any names which happened to strike their fancy, and most of these titles stuck. However it may have been christened, it is certain that the Marie-Thérèse salient is hungrily coveted by the Germans and it is uncommonly hard to hold, because, owing to its shape, it can be attacked on three sides at once.

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To-day, about ten o'clock in the morning, our neighbors the enemy, having pushed their mines almost up to our trenches, suddenly burst out, each man armed only with two big bombs which he threw as quickly as possible. That naturally produced some confusion for a minute or two, during which a German battalion fiercely assailed Marie-Thérèse on all three sides. One of our companies was commanded by a lieutenant who suddenly went mad from the excitement of the hand-to-hand fighting. (That has happened several times in the course of the war.) All our mitrailleurs were killed, and our men forced back into the next trench, which belonged to another regiment. That naturally made more confusion; the men fell back still farther and the Germans, pressing them hard, got hold of some points on our second line. A counter-attack was immediately ordered as some of our relieving-troops happened to be near.

The news of this engagement reached us

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in the middle of the day, and the general commanding our corps gave the order at once to regain our positions at any cost even if all our reserves had to be called up. At two o'clock a battalion of chasseurs made a push on the left of the salient, got as far as our captured first-line trenches and tried to hold them, but was thrust back by a fierce attack made by fresh German troops. A third counter-attack in the evening was led by Captain M., and there was yet another the next morning, but after a very hard struggle we were only able to get back part of our positions. Our units, although very much mixed up, fairly clung to the ground and a new line was quickly organized. After that the Germans could not gain another inch.

All day and all night we fought furiously and with all sorts of weapons; bombs and grenades were freely thrown, but much of the fighting was hand to hand with bayonets, knives, and even spades and picks.

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A German radiogram announced that they had taken four mitrailleuses and two hundred and fifty prisoners; they really got three mitrailleuses, no longer of use, and about one hundred prisoners, all wounded except a few sappers who were surprised in their mines. These attacks, as I have said, are carefully thought out and minutely prepared for; even the columns which are to repel our counter-attacks are all ready. Each man engaged knows exactly what he has to do; behind those who throw bombs and grenades into the trenches come the sappers loaded with bags of cement and bundles of faggots to build up again at once what their comrades have blown to pieces. Ten minutes after an assault such a trench is ready for defense again.

January 25th.—In this trench warfare, which becomes more and more like a siege, there are three things which above all others serve to protect a front and make a successful attack on it almost impossible. These

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are: 1, The curtain fire of the artillery; 2, barbed-wire entanglements and various other obstacles; and 3, the flanking fire of mitrailleuses, machine guns, and rifles. Here, from the nature of the ground where we must work, and also from the unusual proximity of the enemy's lines, these defenses are much more difficult to organize than elsewhere. In many places the German and French lines are not more than ten or twenty metres apart, and at certain points they almost touch, with the result that rifle-firing and bomb-throwing are incessant.

It would be impossible to set up barbed-wire entanglements under such circumstances, especially as the Germans are so lavish in their use of star shells and flares at night that the workers would be as much exposed as in daylight. As we cannot do any better we try to protect the trenches by throwing out in front of them the wire entanglements known as "réseaux Brun," but these are by no means an efficient protection.

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For the reasons which I have given it is hard to manage flanking fire, while the curtain fire of our batteries is seriously hampered by the forest trees, the thick undergrowth, the uneven ground, and also by the close neighborhood of the enemy. But our artillery officers are geniuses in their line and actually manage to get the better of all these difficulties, and to establish curtain firing. The different means by which they succeed are often most ingenious. Sometimes guns are placed several kilometres apart, all aimed with mathematical precision at sectors of the enemy's line only a few metres from each other. The artillery observers are stationed permanently in the first-line trenches; at the least sign of any activity in the enemy's line a telephone call from these observers is followed almost instantly by a shower of shells, and the Germans, who have begun to show their pointed helmets make haste to scuttle back into their burrows. Any number of projected attacks have been stopped

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in this way before they had fairly begun — our “75’s” are watch-dogs who bark and bite at the first suspicious sound.

That admirable artilleryman Colonel B., whose rich imagination is always fertile in tricks of his trade and stratagems of all sorts, has invented a whole series of artillery devices. There is what he calls “tentative firing,” to be directed against roads used by the enemy, or paths which he may take, and also “punitive firing,” “preliminary firing,” to make the enemy answer and disclose his positions, and so on. Just now the Germans are very economical with their artillery. Is it because they have not enough, or are they saving their guns and shells for more serious work? Perhaps they, like ourselves, are passing through a crisis in regard to munitions. But we must not indulge hopes which may prove deceiving—we should not forget that they are the greatest industrial nation on earth!

January 26th.—Certainly this fighting in

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the Argonne is like none other that has ever been known, and has its own especial methods and instruments. Rifles are not much used, but on the other hand there is a great consumption of grenades and bombs of all sorts; some go off by friction, others have fuses attached, and still others explode where they fall, like the engines dear to anarchists.

There is an equal variety in contrivances for throwing bombs, and with these the Germans are well supplied; each of their companies in the Argonne has one large and four small ones. We also have them of all calibers; the "Célerier," which are made from the sockets of shells, and others much larger. One of these hurls a terrible projectile which our men have affectionately christened "the baby." It is a pleasure to see it on its way through the air toward the German trenches, in which it explodes with a tremendous crash. Then big blocks of stone and clods of earth fly ten metres high, mingled with odd legs, arms, and trunks of

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any Boches who may happen to be too close, and the survivors utter fearful yells, for, unlike our men, they do not suffer silently.

On account of the number and variety of weapons soldiers in the trenches never have a moment's rest. Besides, the only way of preventing your enemy from attacking you is to keep him busy all the time, and the general in command of our corps is constantly giving orders to this end. Our adversary must be teased and tormented incessantly, his work destroyed, his plans upset. Has he begun to lay a promising mine? Some fine night a lot of our plucky young fellows, often volunteers, jump into the head of his sap and blow the mine with its makers into bits with mélinite.

This underground warfare, as may be supposed, goes on all the time. Their sappers and ours never stop burrowing and tunneling to get nearer each other. It is pure delight when you are so fortunate as to get up close to the enemy's position without

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his knowledge; the mine is then made ready, and at the appointed time his trench and all who are in it go flying into the air.

But the sappers on his side are also always on the alert, and it often happens that the whereabouts of your mine is discovered, and then it is their turn to come in at one end and blow it up, the game being to destroy you and your work without hurting themselves.

In the hand-to-hand fighting, which we have so often in the main trenches and those which connect them, the rifle and bayonet are not of much use. A shorter weapon, like a hatchet, a boarding-cutlass, or the short infantry sabre of our grandfathers would be more effective at close quarters. Nearly all the German infantrymen are armed with cutlasses. Our men prefer revolvers, and are given them whenever it is possible; they also carry hand-grenades and bombs hooked into their belts.

It seems that we are getting back to the

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sort of warfare which was waged hundreds of years ago. I was reading, last spring, an absorbingly interesting account by M. Gustave Schlumberger of the siege of Constantinople, and really the fighting between the Germans and ourselves here in the Argonne is not very unlike the struggle between Turk and Greek under the Long Walls.

January 29th.—A week to the day after the division on our right was violently attacked we have had another assault, still more violent, on our left division.

About five o'clock I was waked by the heaviest firing which I have heard since we came here. It was bitter cold; the thermometer had gone down in the night below 9 degrees,* but later the sun shone brilliantly in a cloudless sky as we started on horseback toward Vienne-le-Château, taking a road to the left in order to avoid Moiremont. Between Vienne-la-Ville and Vienne-

* 15° Fahrenheit.

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le-Château some "77" shells fell in the fields close beside us, and when we reached the village the colonel commanding the artillery of our division said to us: "We have been obliged to evacuate our first-line trenches, and I have just given the order to fire on them." That was certainly serious. What could have happened? It was this: as one brigade was relieving another, about half past six, the enemy made a lively attack on our first line by means of bomb-throwers with violent artillery curtain firing on the rear zone. One of our salients was also blown up by a mine. This was all according to their usual way of beginning an assault. Immediately afterward our whole front, of three battalions, was heavily attacked, the enemy's troops advancing by fours in close formation, with drums and fifes playing. Our right battalion was pushed back and the officer in command wounded. The centre battalion appeared to be submerged, and almost completely wiped out;

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as a result of this sudden falling back, the left wing of the brigade next to ours lost some of its first-line trenches. The general commanding the division at once began to organize three counter-attacks, the corps commander having given him all the reserve strength which could be spared. The two first attacks did not get beyond what was called "the ravine of the mitrailleuses." The third carried a trench which was being made by the Germans, but was then stopped by the barbed-wire entanglements which they had already put up.

Toward the end of the day yet another counter-attack was launched; that also was unsuccessful, because the men could not force their way through an impenetrable thicket. The corps commander then ordered that we should take advantage of the darkness to strengthen our second line of defense. This had several advantages over our first, as it was more solidly constructed and also had flanking protection; the forest

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was also not so dense, which would allow our artillery to employ curtain firing.

The next morning we had trustworthy information from two different sources, which gave us an idea of how desperate the fighting had been on the day before. We learned that before they went into it the German soldiers had been made drunk; a number of our men said to me: "They fairly stank of alcohol." There was absolutely no doubt about it, and the same thing has been noticed here a number of times; it even happens sometimes that ether takes the place of alcohol.

The men of our centre battalion, surrounded from the beginning of the attack, fought at bay in their trenches all day long and half the night. Very few unwounded prisoners fell into the enemy's hands; when a man had fired his last cartridge he dropped where he stood. We heard that the battalion commander, who was wounded very early in the assault, said to his liaison agent: "Go

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and report to the colonel at once. As for us, we shall die here."

Repeated fights like this make these months in the Argonne seem like one long battle. The Germans show great vigor and keenness; they spend themselves in one attack after another, each methodically planned and violently carried out.

But what, after all, have they made by these efforts? Up to the present time their most fortunate strokes have only won them a few hundred metres.

Their General Staff has evidently taken a lively interest in all these operations in the forest. A long article published recently in the *Gazette de Francfort*, and afterward reprinted as a pamphlet, was called "The War in the Forest of Argonne," and in it the German gains were set forth. I need not say that they were magnified and exaggerated to the fullest extent. Old Field-Marshal Count Haeseler lives in a little village not far from here and from there he

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follows all movements with the utmost attention, and no doubt is consulted as to them. The Kronprinz, who commands the army which is directly opposite us, has his headquarters at Stenay. Is it not necessary for dynastic reasons that he should sometimes succeed, whatever the price of his victory?

It seems to me that there are both local and general reasons to account for such persistent efforts. In the end of September, after their thrust in the region of the Woëvre had made them masters of St.-Mihiel, the Germans were able for a time to indulge in the flattering hope of surrounding Verdun. To accomplish that end they tried, on the west, the same movement which they had found successful to the eastward. A series of attacks in the forest of Argonne, or on its borders, would allow them, they thought, to gain possession of the railway between Ste.-Menehould and Verdun, and after that it would be comparatively easy to invest the fortress. They were all the more en-

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couraged because in the first fighting in the Argonne they were able to get the upper hand, on account of their superior organization and equipment. They had any number of sappers and miners, for instance, and from Metz, which is quite near, they could get all sorts of supplies. But in spite of their efforts, their advance during the last four months has been insignificant; it seems likely that Ste.-Menehould will be a goal as impossible for them to attain as Calais or Paris.

February 1st.—This afternoon the Germans have been exploding large mines under the salient of Bagatelle, where one of our sectors ends. While both wings of our works crumbled into the craters made by the explosion, a troop of the enemy rushed at the centre, where there were no accessory defenses; that particular place was so constantly swept by fire that it was impossible to put up barbed wire. A counter-attack should have been made immediately, but it

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was somewhat delayed, because the battalion of reserves did not assemble quite quickly enough. The further we go the more we are convinced that it is imperatively necessary to have our reserves close at hand, and always ready to be called upon.

February 2d.—As I was on my way back from the Croix-Gentin, about five o'clock this afternoon, I met Lieutenant M., who gave me a piece of bad news. One of our best friends and comrades, Captain Boiteux, was killed by a bullet in the head as he was inspecting one of our first-line trenches. He was passing quickly across one of our loopholes when he was hit; the Germans have special marksmen detailed to fire at these gaps in the parapets whenever they perceive the least movement. What an admirable officer we lose in him! Slender and lithe, with a handsome, intelligent, dark head; devoted to his work, active, and full of energy, always occupied and always ready for any duty, no matter

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how difficult it might be. He came to us from the Ecole de Guerre, and, although he was only thirty-four years of age, he was married and the father of three little girls. We used to have many long talks in the evenings when he came in, all covered with mud from making his rounds; then suddenly he would say: "Now I must be off—I want to write to my wife before I turn in."

They have just brought back his body, and laid it on a bed in a bare and wretched room, hurriedly made a little less dreary by some wreaths of leaves and a few flags. He is dressed as he fell; his head is wrapped in bandages, leaving only his face uncovered; on his breast is his képi, pierced with the bullet-hole. A few candles give a faint and timid light; two soldiers, with fixed bayonets, stand immovably on guard; a priest, who is also a stretcher-bearer, kneels at the foot of the bed, reading prayers from his missal, and one after another our officers watch beside

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their comrade who, in the dim light, seems to be quietly asleep.

February 3d.—As to the morale of the Germans, we could not do anything more dangerous than to deceive ourselves in regard to it. It is better, for every reason, to face the truth and acknowledge it. The German spirit is still undaunted. Their soldiers fight admirably, and when they are surrounded they often prefer to die rather than surrender. Notwithstanding this, however, the letters which they receive from their people at home show much less confidence than in the first months of the war. There are frequent signs of fatigue and discouragement; the women, more particularly, complain bitterly of the length of the war, the high price of provisions, etc.

February 10th.—We went this morning to Vienne-le-Château and then on to La Harazée. While we were there, about half past nine, a very violent attack was made on the

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Marie-Thérèse salient. After his usual fashion, the enemy blew up part of our trenches by means of a mine, and then at once poured a considerable force into the breach thus made. The first ranks were armed with bombs and grenades; then followed a great mass of men who managed to occupy part of our line. Our reserve battalion, which came up at once, delivered a counter-attack, which stopped their advance; other counter-attacks were carried out during the day, and we won back part of the lost ground. The hand-to-hand fighting was more than usually ferocious, as the Germans, who for the most part had been made drunk beforehand, massacred their prisoners. There is abundant testimony as to this fact, and of a kind which does not admit of contradiction. An adjutant and two private soldiers deposed under oath that they had witnessed the following incident: two of our men were surrounded by a group of Germans, who first disarmed them, and immediately afterward shot them down with revolvers.

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February 11th.—The chasseurs of the —th battalion captured a German mitrailleuse the other day, and the general commanding the division offered them the usual prize of two hundred francs which the General Staff gives on such occasions, whereupon one of the men who had taken the gun said to him: “No, thank you, General! We are quite willing to have our heads mashed for France, but not for money.” This was from a poor peasant of Lorraine, to whom two hundred francs meant a fortune.

February 12th.—This forest of Argonne is full of enchanting bits of scenery; valleys, always fresh and cool, with cheerful little streams running through them; undergrowth where lights and shadows play; gentle slopes with flowing lines; pools where the great trees look at their own likenesses in the clear water.

And all these charming woods and streams and springs have the most delightful names imaginable, such as the Bois de la Viergette,

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le Ruisseau des Emerlots, la Fontaine la Houyette, la Fontaine-aux-Charmes, la Fontaine-Madame.

The ridge which forms a sort of backbone to the forest is called La Haute Chevauchée — a name which makes one think of the chase here long ago, when the stag was run down by huntsmen and hounds after furious galloping through the leafy alleys.

About noon a great number of Germans, in columns of fours, fell upon our battalion to the north of the old salient of Marie-Thérèse, but as their advance was stopped by infantry fire, while our artillery swept their rear, they were thrown back, leaving many dead behind them.

At one o'clock in the afternoon our artillery began, in order to prepare for an attack which was to be launched an hour later. Two companies of the —th battalion of chasseurs dashed toward the enemy's positions, but could not get far, as they were

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met by a lively fusillade, combined with the fire of some mitrailleuses which were hidden behind trees, and had therefore escaped our artillery. One detachment, however, managed to gain about fifty yards and get into a communicating trench very near the enemy's line, where they held on obstinately.

February 13th.—We have blown up a German mine in front of our left division, to the east of Bagatelle. The Germans attacked the road to Bagatelle on both sides, forcing back our sentries. They then pushed along through our left-hand trenches and proceeded to wall themselves in behind sacks filled with earth. Three companies promptly reinforced our line of defense on that side, and by nine o'clock in the evening our troops had destroyed the enemy's barriers, reoccupied the entire line, and put our observation posts back where they had been. Along the front of our right division the Germans succeeded in blowing up one of our stores of

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explosives, which was in the Blanleuil trenches, on the crest between the Ravin Sec and the Ravin de la Fontaine-Madame, but a curtain of artillery fire put an end at once to any possibility of attack on their part.

All night there was great activity on their side and ours, especially in the direction of the Four-de-Paris, and in the central sector we advanced about five hundred and fifty metres.

February 14th.—Everywhere, but especially toward Marie-Thérèse, the enemy is uncommonly lively. We interfere with him as much as possible, by means of bombs and grenades, having always in mind the instructions of the general in command of our corps, which are that we must keep our morale superior to that of our adversary, and at the first reasonable moment take the initiative in attack.

February 16th.—Our artillery is now supporting the left division of the corps next to

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us, which is at grips with a strong German force in the region of Bolante. During the night we have made several lucky strokes against the Boche mines in different places; it seems to us that our foe is becoming somewhat less aggressive. The rôles are gradually changing; in the beginning, thanks to his superior equipment, and also to his great strength in sappers and miners, he had rather the upper hand, but now he seems, little by little, to be losing it.

In the meantime, our lines of defense are everywhere more strongly organized and the curtain of our artillery established wherever it is necessary, while the vigilance of our officers and men never flags for a moment. The result is that the enemy's attacks—and Heaven knows he makes them often enough!—are for the most part failures. From time to time, after a shower of bombs and grenades, the Boches come out of their trenches and advance in close formation. In a few seconds they are pelted with a hail

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of shells and bullets, and back they go quickly into their holes, except those who lie dead outside their parapets. At other times they tunnel their way along, in order to keep their men as much as possible out of the open, but these tunnels often turn out to be graves for the human moles who dig them; our men are always on the watch, ready to throw bombs which frequently leave no one alive.

All along our front, by untiring vigilance and incessant activity, we manage to frustrate the plans of our adversary before they can be matured, but it is easy to understand what fatigue and mental strain this involves for our troops and their leaders. In the first-line trenches our men are on the alert during the whole twenty-four hours, standing in mud and water, subject to constant fire from every sort of projectile. Imagine what life under such conditions must be!

The whistling of shells and bullets in the forest makes strange, fantastic music; in these narrow ravines the least sound repeats itself with astonishing amplitude and so-

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nority, and as the troops which are held in reserve must be as near the first line as possible, it is almost as hard for them to rest as if they were actually under fire, while in the encampments where they go when they are relieved they are almost always subject to violent bombardment.

But why dwell on all this fatigue and danger? The spirit of our men remains beyond praise; it is something sublime, almost miraculous, compelling one to bow before it in all humility. It must be remembered that, even on days when there is no serious fighting, the losses in killed and wounded often mount up into the hundreds.

I was present the other day at the review of a regiment which was on its way back from the trenches. A cold rain was falling, and the men were covered with mud from head to foot. They were almost all young, surprisingly young, with beardless faces, but all had the same expression of seasoned courage and resolution.

I remember being particularly struck by

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the proud bearing of one of these "Marie-Louises," * a slender little corporal. The general stopped before him to ask some questions, and his battalion commander said: "He's the best bomb-thrower in the battalion; no one can touch him at hurling hand-grenades. He has only been with us for three months, but at the very first opportunity we'll make him a sergeant." Truly it may be said of such as he what Napoleon said of his conscripts: "Honor and courage radiate from them."

Many of the officers are scarcely older than the men whom they command. We had a number of second lieutenants sent to us lately, young fellows who had just passed their examinations to enter St.-Cyr. They all arrived full of dash and vigor, ready to throw themselves heart and soul into whatever was expected of them.

It is not uncommon to see the cross of the

* A name given to the students at the Military School of St.-Cyr.

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Legion of Honor shining here and there on one of these young breasts. Some of them have already been wounded two or three times, and are veterans, rich in experience and full of resource. It is not wonderful that their men regard them with mingled admiration and respect. What a send-off these boys have, what a magnificent entry into life! To the heart of youth the brightest beams of the rising sun are pale compared with the first rays of glory — so said Vauvenargues, who himself was a soldier.

February 17th.—This is the day set for the offensive on our left in the Hurlus region, in which the business of our corps is to keep up such incessant activity that the Germans who face us will not be able to withdraw any of their troops to use elsewhere. All day we have heard very heavy firing toward the west. Our right-hand division has been executing a series of operations, one of them being to blow up a German

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blockhouse on the right bank of the stream which flows out of the Fontaine-aux-Charmes. Everything which was not destroyed by the explosion is being hammered by one of our "65" guns, at a range of four hundred metres. About ten o'clock we exploded a mine under a trench in the Four-de-Paris region, and part of a battalion of chasseurs jumped into the gap thus made and pushed on to the next line. Immediately a strong German counter-attack was launched, advancing as usual in columns of fours, pushing our force back and getting as far as the trench which had been torn up by our mine. There they were met by a mixed fire of infantry and artillery, under which they fell back quickly, leaving many dead behind them.

The objective of our principal attack was the ridge of Blanleuil, and every detail had been most carefully thought out.

While the battalions chosen for the attack were resting, during the last four days, three large mines which we had laid under the

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enemy's positions were all ready to be touched off. All the assaulting party were trained bomb-throwers, and the troops were arranged in three echelons. The duty of the first was to jump into the enemy's works directly after the explosion, and to push on as much farther as possible. The second echelon was to support the first and hold the ground which had been taken, and the third was to back them both up and make sure of success. Each assaulting column was preceded by bomb-throwers; then came the chasseurs with fixed bayonets, then the sappers from the engineer corps carrying tools and sacks of earth, and last of all a mitrailleuse. At eight o'clock the mines blew up under the German trenches, one of them exploding at the same time a mine which the Germans themselves had made. At the same moment our artillery began a curtain fire on the rear of the adversary's positions, keeping it up on all points from which he might attempt to make a flanking movement. In another mo-

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ment our three assaulting columns emerged from the communication trenches in which they had formed and advanced, headed by their section commanders. The battalion commander whose duty it was to direct the attack, a man of the most splendid courage, stood upright on the parapet of the trench, calmly pointing out their way to his men with his walking-stick. Our columns flung themselves at the enemy's trench, breaking into it in three places; about a hundred Germans who were in it were killed, and their bodies left lying there; we took four prisoners and also brought back a mitrailleuse. By half past eight we held three hundred and fifty metres of the enemy's first line; all four section commanders had been killed or wounded, but the men were now fairly started; part of them rushed on, leaped into the enemy's communication trenches, and thus reached the trenches of his second line, which were crowded with Germans abundantly supplied with bombs and all other am-

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munition. After the first moment of surprise, violent counter-attacks were poured against our men from all the communication trenches at the German rear, and they were obliged to fall back to the first-line trench which they had just taken. This was very deep and narrow at the top, widening out at the bottom; the parapet facing our line was low, but much higher at the back; this was to prevent our firing on the German lines, and also to afford shelter to their men in the event of a counter-attack.

By this time our engineers had begun to fill up the holes made by our shells, and to block the ends of the trench which we had taken with sacks of earth, in order to prevent an attack through the communication trenches. The second echelon now came to reinforce the first, and two of our mitrailleuses took up their positions. A German company showed itself in the open only to be mown down by one of them instantly, for which the revenge was a violent counter-fire,

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and several of our gunners were killed or wounded beside their pieces. The Germans now recommenced their counter-attacks; these were particularly directed at our right, where the incessant rain of their bombs made our positions hard to hold. The officer in command had already reinforced the front by two companies of the third echelon; a third company was at once brought up and held close by as a reserve. The trenches and communication trenches were as full as it was practicable to have them; it was impossible to move many men on the ground between our line and the trench which we had taken, because it was covered with an inextricable tangle of felled trees and other obstructions.

Our last company kept those who were fighting supplied with grenades, bombs, and also with sacks of earth, which are almost as useful.

The Germans renewed their attacks over and over again, and by slipping along the

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communication trenches they managed to get to the middle of our first line, but each time as they came on they were repulsed. Soon after midday they pelted the trench which we had taken from them and also our first and second lines with their "77's" and "105's," and *minenwerfer*. The ground was ploughed up, and our trenches badly knocked about; the battalion which formed the rear-guard of our first line of defense had twenty men killed and fifty-three wounded as they stood in the trench.

Between half past one and two o'clock the Germans tried a bayonet charge in close formation. That was broken up by our rifle-fire, but they soon came back, converging from all the communication trenches, and hurling a great number of explosives. The fiery rain of bombs became more and more severe, especially on the right; one chasseur after another was killed or wounded. Toward half past four we lost that part of the trench, only because all the men who

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held it were dead. Their battalion commander, who had risked his life a hundred times since the morning, stood on the parapet calling out, "Steady, chasseurs! Stand firm!" until he fell over with a bullet in his brain.

The general commanding the division gave the order to bring up another reserve battalion, and to launch a counter-attack with what was left of the battalion actually engaged, but that effort was a failure for two reasons — the ground was not clear enough, and we were short of bombs.

The enemy then made a flanking attack on the other part of our trench; one by one our men were assailed by an uninterrupted shower of bombs. They fell back, inch by inch, taking two hours to cover two hundred metres, and leaving forty per cent of their number on the way. Little by little we retired from the trench we had taken, and fell back on our positions. Our general ordered us to draw together on our front, and

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to hold on there. Our artillery had supported the infantry throughout, but at certain times it could not be altogether effective because our lines and those of the enemy were too close to each other.

Our engineers kept each attacking column supplied with all that was necessary to make the captured trench fit for defense again; all day long they toiled hard under a pounding fire which knocked their work to pieces as soon as it was in place. The struggle was magnificent; it is not too much to say that there was no foot of ground lost unless the man who held it was killed. There were no more bombs, there was very little ammunition; the men in the wings, which were overcrowded and flanked, could not be supplied from the centre, because the communicating trench was obstructed. A company of chasseurs fought for two hours with the rifles and ammunition of the Germans, throwing back at them their own unexploded bombs.

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It was another example of the absolute necessity of supplying our troops with so many good and effective bombs that they may be used without stint.

All the units engaged, whether for the attack and retention of the enemy's position, or for the retention of our own positions at Blanleuil and other points on our front, were altogether admirable in their courage, dash, and tenacity. The officers did their duty nobly. The Germans certainly suffered severely; their losses are said to be considerably heavier than ours.

February 18th.—This morning, about three o'clock, the first German shells fell upon the village where we are now. The familiar whistling sound waked me, but nobody got up. It was dark and also cold — two excellent reasons for staying where we were, and after all no harm was done, except to some chairs and plates in one of the officers' mess-rooms.

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February 20th.—While I was at Châlons for a couple of hours to-day, I saw a procession of four or five hundred Germans who had been taken prisoners yesterday near Perthes. They went through the principal street, surrounded on all sides by territorial troops with fixed bayonets; the populace of the town was much excited. Most of the men seemed to me to be of a type distinctly inferior to those which I have hitherto seen. Some were knock-kneed, some round-shouldered, some sickly-looking—there were all varieties of physical deficiency.

What a contrast to those superb prisoners of the Prussian Guard whom we took around Rheims! They were strapping fellows, vigorous and well set up, giving a vivid impression of youth in its prime.

February 27th.—The fighting on our left, at Hurlus, still goes on. This morning while we were galloping on the heights of Mont-Yvron, the sound of the cannon seemed to

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be quite near. Going by Maffrécourt, one reaches other hills which spread out in the arc of a circle. The soil is dry — more like the chalky earth of Champagne than the mud and slime to which we are used in Argonne. To the north we looked over the village and château of Hans, the place where Attila and Brunswick halted, as one may learn from an inscription there. To the left lies the village and hill of Valmy, with its column to commemorate the battle—a fine shaft, visible from a long distance on every side. The heart of Kellermann is at its base, and the stone which covers it bears Goethe's celebrated phrase: "This place and day mark a new era in the history of the world, and you may say 'I was there.' " We are on the very ground where the battle was fought,—a conflict more important in its relation to history than from the military point of view. The Duke of Brunswick's army, having forced its way through the passes of the Argonne, which Dumouriez has rather in-

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accurately called the Thermopylæ of France, faced Germany and had its back turned toward Paris. It was just the opposite with the army of Kellermann. The fighting resolved itself into a violent cannonade, for the duke, disconcerted by the military aspect and firm stand of the revolutionary troops (whom he had expected to turn tail at his first volley), did not dare come to closer quarters. Goethe has described the profound discouragement of Brunswick's officers the night after the battle. They passed it in the old inn at the sign of the Moon, which still stands on the highroad between Ste.-Menehould and Châlons. It had rained so hard for the last week that their baggage was stuck somewhere in the mud; the inn was execrable and they could get nothing to eat; altogether the plan of coercing revolutionary France seemed to them more and more hazardous.

The present descendants of the duke have shown themselves more persevering, which

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will mean all the more credit to us when we succeed in turning them out !

March 2d.—We are gradually getting the upper hand of the enemy; the initiative of attack is usually on our side, and when the Germans try their hands at it their efforts almost always come to nothing. We owe our success here, as everywhere else, to three qualities — energy, tenacity, and patience. We have just had another proof of this in a fight which took place to-day at Blangleuil. The enemy had been active before our position there for several days; possession of that rise would allow him to enfilade our salient at Bagatelle, and by steady work he had been able to push his advance works to within about twenty yards of our trenches. His game was to keep hammering at our first line with his “77” and “105” guns, at short range, throwing a hail of shells which smashed our trenches first at one place and then at another, so that we were kept constantly busy repairing them.

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At daybreak on the 1st of March the firing became still more violent, and the "105's" also turned their attention to the rear of our position; everything pointed to an attack before long.

Just then we had one battalion in our first line, and another as a reserve in the sector to the rear. At the request of the infantry, our artillery opened a curtain fire to cover the front of our trenches. The general in command of the division ordered two more battalions to advance in the direction of La Harazée, and, as the neighborhood of Four-de-Paris was also under severe fire, a brigade was quickly moved to our line at Biesme.

About a quarter past seven in the morning three mines were blown up under our trenches, making a deep crater in their centre, and two smaller ones to the right and left, overturning the parapets and burying many of our men beneath them. The smoke and dust had not cleared away before the enemy was in the craters throwing bombs,

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and, thus being in our trench, they attempted to get into those which adjoined it.

The four officers and many non-commissioned officers of the two companies which were in our first line were killed or wounded by this onset. The men of our second line had not time to come up through the communication trenches, and could only manage to retard the assailants with their rifle-fire; these filtered through at one spot after another, while a hand-to-hand struggle was going on in that part of the trench which had not yet been taken.

The Germans brought up heavy reinforcements, but these, as they arrived, were met by the fire of our artillery and mitrailleuses; their advance was thus frequently checked, but part of our first battalion had already been engulfed by the German flood. Their men were no sooner in our trenches than they used them against us with astonishing rapidity; their attacking column had always at its heels a swarm of workers bearing sacks of earth, bundles of faggots and metal shields,

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with which they quickly improvised a parapet. We managed to stop them, however, by a tremendous effort, and our right-hand company held its position, although with heavy loss.

A counter-attack, launched by another battalion, first succeeded in checking the advance of the Germans, and then began to push them back. Yet another battalion, ready and close at hand, could not come in because the field was swept by the fire of the enemy's "77's" and "105's," as well as by that of his mitrailleuses and infantry, and he was also able to enfilade us, which made communication exceedingly difficult.

The general in command renewed his order that our positions should be maintained, at whatever cost, and ordered also that preparations should be made for a counter-attack, with the co-operation of a company of engineers, as soon as it was dark.

The Germans could not supply their left with the reinforcements on which they were counting, because they were continually

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shelled by our artillery, but they contrived to bring some troops up on their right, notwithstanding the fire of our mitrailleuses, by way of the ravine of the Fontaine-Madame.

The artillery of our division proceeded forthwith to make careful preparations for the nocturnal counter-attack, which was to have the valuable help of several batteries attached to the adjoining division. The assaulting battalion reconnoitred the ground as far as possible, and by nightfall the different companies, well furnished with bombs and grenades, faced the forces which they were to attack.

At ten minutes before seven our artillery began a lively fire upon the enemy's positions in general, followed up by a more particular attack intended to batter down his flanking protections.

Just at this time a tremendous storm broke, accompanied by heavy snow-squalls. But it could not hinder our attacks; as soon as a whistle gave the signal our men leaped

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forward and rushed with fixed bayonets against the enemy, in spite of heavy artillery fire, crying out: "Hurrah! Forward!"

By this first dash one company succeeded in breaking through as far as the German second line at several points; little by little our men edged their way into the trenches, clearing them out with the bayonet as they went. For more than four hours the fight went on in this first-line trench and in the communicating trenches leading to it, in which the Germans had barricaded themselves. The ground was won foot by foot; while our men fought their way they had to demolish obstructions, clear out heaps of corpses, and put the trench in serviceable condition. At last we succeeded in taking back almost all our ground; only an insignificant part was still in the enemy's hands. We found much valuable material in the German trenches; tools, sacks of earth and shields which we turned to account at once, to say nothing of many rifles and cartridges. Our men bore themselves

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nobly; the young soldiers went to the attack with the courage and steadiness of veterans, for which they were commended by the corps commander in a general order. The struggle was so desperate that almost no prisoners were taken; we had only four in all, two of whom were severely and two slightly wounded, and from what they told us we gathered that only two Frenchmen, both of them badly hurt, had been taken.

The German loss was certainly heavy; for we took up more than a hundred bodies, and the troops at their rear were held in close formation for some time under the fire of our heavy guns and mitrailleuses. Judging from what our prisoners told us, our shelling of their trenches was remarkably accurate and effective.

I met an officer this morning who had just been for six days in the first-line trenches, at a place where the fighting was especially fierce. He looked dazed, like a man who has had a knock on the head from which

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he has not yet recovered. His voice sounded muffled and some of his words were indistinct: "I beg your pardon," he said to me; "it's very odd, but I don't seem able to say what I want to." During the fight on March 1st, when our trench fell into the hands of the Germans, five of our men retreated to the dark end of a communication trench. When our troops retook the trench these men came out, but in the half-light they were mistaken for Boches and fired on. Their sergeant was killed, and the four others went back into their hole again. After a time they threw over the parapet pebbles wrapped in paper, on which was written, "We are Frenchmen; don't fire on us," and they signed their names and gave their section and company. They were then naturally received with open arms and fed back to strength, for they were half dead with hunger.

The long list of our battles in the Argonne shows the triumph of persistent effort.

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Throughout the war our victories have been due to energy and tenacity, a fact which is even more evident here than elsewhere.

End of July, 1915.—After four months spent on another part of the front, the chances of military service have brought me into Argonne again, and I find myself back in the interesting little city of X——, the military centre of the district. It is still crowded and noisy; its principal street, with a square at either end, is jammed day and night with long lines of wagons, automobiles, and motor-trucks; here and there on the pavement a civilian's dark coat makes him conspicuous among the throng of men in uniform.

The little town has become one enormous shop, a shop with a hundred doors and a thousand counters — a very Land of Promise for dealers in tinned food of every sort.

During these first days my duty has obliged me to go over a wide stretch of country, and I have revisited the dreary

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little village, always swimming with water, where we spent last winter. So far it has not suffered much from the misdeeds of the enemy's "noisy gun," so-called because its shells land with a tremendous crash. Near the X—— farm the odd little village with its conical roofs, which the colonial troops amused themselves by building, in what may be called the Soudanese style of architecture, is considerably larger than when I last saw it. The territorials from the Morvan began this spring to make themselves comfortable quarters on the bank of the X—— brook, on a charming site where they are much better off than they were before. Everywhere there are temporary dwellings of all sorts, from the simple hut of branches piled together to the little forester's cabin, which sometimes even possesses the incredible luxury of glazed windows with sashes that open and shut!

I went to a very touching and beautiful ceremony this morning. The bishop of C——

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came to the church at the upper end of the town, near the château, to celebrate high mass in honor of the men who have died here in defense of their country.

The dead of the Argonne! In no corner of our soil has the blood of our soldiers been shed with more profusion or more heroism. How much courage, how much fortitude have been lavished in the forest on which one looks down from the château, in the narrow valleys, on the slopes of the ravines, during the bitter struggle which has swayed to and fro here during the past year!

No part of France, not even Lorraine in the region of Gerbeviller, has been more systematically looted, ravaged, and destroyed than the district which lies between Ste.-Meneshould and Revigny. Almost every village is in ruins.

Under the summer sunlight some of these wrecks, as at Sermaize and Sommeilles, are clothed with a charm and dignity which recalls the antique; it would be easy to be-

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lieve that twenty centuries are behind their crumbling walls.

But the unfortunate people who used to live in them are not particularly alive to this æsthetic beauty; having no longer a roof to cover them, they must manage to exist in their cellars, or else camp in the open air. An association of English Quakers, co-operating with our government, has come generously to their aid, and is busily putting up here and there little wooden houses among the ruins.

These can be built with surprising rapidity, and are most useful, but they certainly have an alien look in these old stone villages of the Meuse valley.

By some extraordinary piece of good luck, the hordes of the Kronprinz spared the pretty château of N——. It sheltered the staff of a general who had to get out as fast as he could after the battle of the Marne, and consequently had not time to burn the house and destroy its contents. It may also

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be that the presence of the owner of the château, who remained during the invasion, had something to do with saving her dwelling.

It must never be said that the Germans are entirely devoid of chivalry, for they allowed the old lady to remain in a wretched kennel next to the servants' kitchen. There can be no mistake as to this, for they scrawled on the door of the den in chalk words, which may still be read there: "Apartment reserved for the mistress of the château. Admittance strictly forbidden." Not far away a large and handsome building, partly château and partly farmhouse, was another Teutonic general's headquarters. Before they decamped, the gentlemen of his staff took pains to slash the tapestry of the furniture in the drawing-room with their swords, as well as the leather of the dining-room chairs. There happened to be a few pigs in the stable which had not been eaten; these same officers took the trouble to send for

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them and to shut them up in the living-rooms of the château, where the owner found them when he came back two days later.

There is abundant testimony to show that this really happened, and perhaps it shows, even more than the atrocities committed by the Germans, the trend of their minds and the quality of what one may call their taste.

This Argonne country, full of woods and springs, is never more delightful than during the height of summer. While men are fighting steadily, killing each other with might and main, God's humbler creatures are enjoying life in perfect security.

The young partridges pick up their food on the roads as freely as if they were only humble sparrows; hares dart out from under one's feet everywhere; the wild boars, no longer hunted, show themselves in groups on the edges of the forest and in the clearings.

August 2d.—The Germans made an attack on "côte" 213 last night, which is in

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the sector of the Fontaine-aux-Charmes. We had noticed their growing activity for several days, and finally they bombarded our trenches with their heavy artillery and *minenwerfer*, having advanced by tunnelling, in order to get as close to our lines as they could.

There was another attack this afternoon at St.-Hubert, more to the left, upon a sector where there were three battalions, and here the Germans made copious use of liquid fire.

A man belonging to a landwehr regiment was killed the other day, and we found two very interesting letters on his body. The first was from his mother.

ASCHERSLEBEN, July 14th, 1915.

Papa has been to see your family. Things are not going very well; your wife only gets, altogether and for everything, twenty-one marks a month for herself and her two children, barely enough to give them dry bread and a little soup. She is obliged to leave the children to be looked after by some

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one else while she goes about looking for work. This is very hard to be had, and even if she can make sixty pfennigs a day she has to spend it all for the children, so she has nothing left.

My dear son, I beg that you will go to see your colonel and ask him to give you a little more money, so that you may send some to your family. The distress is great. Show him this letter. If he will not, ask him to send you back home, that you may find work and so keep your family from dying of hunger. It takes away all my strength to hear those who belong to you crying in their misery. Do be so good as to show him this letter. There are so many men fighting that one more or less will not be noticed. For my own part I have given five children to the war. So, either manage to send more money to your family, that they may not starve to death, or else get sent home yourself.

To the same man from his wife, July 6th:

Impossible to get cabbages or vegetables; potatoes will soon be very dear; there is

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very little fruit. Gherkins for pickling cost seven or eight pfennigs — there are no more cucumbers nor horseradish. Do you ever think of what we are able to buy? Money has no value any more. Five marks are exactly as if one had nothing. Wool is exceedingly dear.

I have read that one of our newspapers means to start an inquiry in order to find out whether the French are gifted with a talent for organization in as high a degree as the Germans.

It is a thousand pities that this sheet could not have sent one of its editors to study the distributing railway-station which supplies our army, for this station or depot is really a marvel of organization. Simplicity, quickness, absence of red tape and useless officials, judicious adaptation of means to their ends — everything, in short, which is needed in order to make a difficult service work smoothly may be found here.

Each army, as every one knows, has its

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own distributing station, which plays the same part in regard to it that the heart does in our human organism. The distributing station is also like the heart, because it draws in and sends out.

Such a station is the indispensable link between the supplying country in the rear and the fighting front. From the rear it receives men, arms, munitions, provisions, clothes, and all sorts of equipments for the men, as well as their letters and parcels. All of these are distributed over our front, and from the front to the rear come men on leave, the sick and wounded, arms and equipments no longer fit to be used — in short, everything which the fighting units want to get out of their way.

It is not hard to see that such a service is necessarily very complicated. Then also it is of capital importance; if there is any hitch or delay at the station its effect will be immediately felt at the front, and the combatants may be deprived of such indis-

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pensable supplies as food, clothing, or ammunition.

Captain R—— did the honors of his station, which he manages as if it were some great industry, or a large factory of which he was at the head. In the first place he gave us a few brief and concise explanations as to the way in which the whole machine was run, and showed us a plan hanging on the wall which made everything clear at a glance. Here at different points on the line were the principal depots; a large enclosure for the live stock, a park for the artillery, another for the sappers, a centre for sanitary supplies, etc. The course of the incoming and outgoing currents was marked by arrows — it was all perfectly simple and easy to understand. The next thing was to see how this well-planned system actually worked. We arrived just as the daily provision trains were being made up. Each of these trains supplies its own particular unit, and is fitted out on a separate track; so many cars for hay and oats, so many for other forage, so

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many for meat, bread, vegetables, and so on. These trains will start at night, and arrive at their destinations before morning, each to be met at its own station by gangs of men with wagons who will distribute their contents to the troops nearest that point. Huge barracks built conveniently near the platforms of the distributing station hold many different sorts of merchandise. To go through them was like visiting a series of huge shops. Everything was clean, everything in perfect order; every one knew just what he had to do, and did it. The parcel-post service alone, the working of which we examined in detail, keeps more than thirty soldiers busy sorting and classifying.

Then we went to see the trains which were about to start for the front. A hospital train was just coming in, bringing sick and wounded, for whom surgeons and orderlies were waiting, ready to distribute them in the proper groups. There were the slightly wounded and disabled, who were to remain in hospital where they were, others who

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needed immediate care, others who were to be sent further to base hospitals, etc. All this sorting out was done very quickly and in the most orderly manner.

Order, rapidity, simplification — those were the words which occurred to the mind most frequently in the course of our rapid inspection.

This improvised organization answers its purposes admirably. At its head is a chief who is active, hard-working, responsible, having his whole heart in his work and anxious to do as much as possible for every one. Under him, working in two or three large rooms, are a set of officers who second him zealously and to the best of their ability. Telephone calls succeed each other almost without interruption, replacing reams of written reports, to the great advantage of the service.

The department charged with furnishing supplies to the army has worked well since

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the beginning of the war. Even in the heat and stress of battle, when conditions are most difficult, or when there has been a great concentration of troops, the distribution of food has been made in good time, and the men have received their rations promptly. The food of our soldiers is excellent, and as varied as it is possible to make it; this has certainly had a share in maintaining the high morale of the army.

I know the chief commissary of an army corps, a man particularly intelligent and resourceful, who, from one day to the next, found the number of men dependent upon him for their food exactly doubled. It was when the battle of the Yser was at its height, and other units were temporarily added to his corps, so that it was a question of finding eighty thousand rations instead of forty thousand. He managed somehow to get around the difficulty, and all the men were fed without delay.

But after all the good administration of

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a commissary depends altogether upon that of his distributing railway-station !

August 11th.—I was waked very early this morning by the combined noises of a furious cannonade and a violent thunder-storm.

There has been a severe German attack in the ravine of the Fontaine-la-Houyette, preceded, as usual by a heavy bombardment with large shells and torpedoes.

End of October.—Nothing happens any more in our Argonne, where it used to be so lively. The Germans do not make any attacks, and one quiet day follows another. The sum of our daily losses has fallen to zero, probably because we have consolidated our defenses, and built excellent bomb-proof shelters in case we should be shelled again. The forest and the whole country are magnificent in these autumn days, and the trees are clothed in the most marvellous colors.

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November 10th.—Still calm, still nothing happening on our front. It certainly is a tremendous change. The Germans used formerly to attack us regularly every week or ten days, but now they remain strictly on the defensive. They scarcely even answer our artillery fire.

What has become of the fine plan to take our railway between Ste.-Meneshould and Verdun? How long it seems since we have had a rhodomontade from Major Moraht! After so many efforts and sacrifices on their part, this sudden inaction is hard to account for. The most probable reason for it is that the Germans have found out the futility of their attempts. Perhaps the German General Staff, on adding up its losses in Argonne, has come to the conclusion that thousands of its best soldiers have been slaughtered in the vain pursuit of an elusive and fantastic goal.

The cost of throwing military limelight on the Kronprinz may seem to them rather excessive.

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Whatever their reasons may be, the attitude of the Germans in Argonne has changed completely. Henceforth they seem likely to remain on the defensive here, as on all other parts of the western front. The change is great, and of significant importance, because it calls attention to another check. The Germans have not succeeded any better in Argonne than they did on the Yser — there and here they tried to pass — and we have stopped them.

V

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OF all cities in the world, none gave the impression of a stronghold more strikingly than Verdun. The great encircling walls, in which the heavy outer gates were much as Vauban left them, compressed the town like a mighty cuirass, and in its narrow streets, even in time of peace, there were always many more soldiers than civilians. The Meuse, a stream now forever tragic, flows through the middle of the city, but no fresh air seemed to follow its current; a river is always the chief ornament of any other abode of men, but in this place given over to war it was only an additional defense — another wide moat.

In August and September, 1915, just a year after the war began, my military service took me frequently to Verdun. At that

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time it had been for months one of the quietest of our sectors; to the right and left, around Eparges and in Argonne, the fighting had been fierce, and was renewed from time to time, but in the Verdun salient, which lay between, there was little going on.

A large part of the population had, in consequence, remained in the city. A few big German shells fired at very long range had, to be sure, fallen within the walls; they made a great noise but did little damage, and the gallant men and women of Lorraine, whose country has been a battle-field for hundreds of years, are not easily frightened. Almost all of the shops were open. Verdun is known far and wide for its sugared almonds, those "dragées" without which no wedding-feast nor christening in France is complete, and the confectioners went on calmly making them. Some ingenious spirits among them had even invented a large "dragée-bombe," shaped like the shell of our "75" gun, which opened

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suddenly with a loud report, scattering a harmless shrapnel of almonds.

The merest glance at the map is enough to show that the old citadel bars one of the principal highways from Germany into France. In the first days of the war, when the Germans were making their great offensive in Belgium, they took it for granted that Verdun would fall without a struggle, and at the time of their rush on Paris, early in September, 1914, the French army defending the fortress, commanded by General Sarrail, found itself peculiarly placed. The Kronprinz's army, spreading down by all the roads from the Argonne, had succeeded in getting to the south of Revigny; General Sarrail's right wing rested on Verdun, so that his main force faced west instead of north, and in that position played its part in the battle of the Marne. After that defeat the Germans retreated as fast as they could go; General Sarrail's army pursued them to the north, reoccupied Ste.-Mene-

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hould, and pushed as far as possible into the forest of Argonne.

As the Germans had not succeeded in taking Verdun during their great enveloping advance on Paris, they next tried to attack it on the other side, from the plain of Woëvre. An effort on what are called the Hauts de Meuse gave them possession of St.-Mihiel, and if after that they had been able to cross the Meuse and push on further, Verdun would have been almost entirely flanked. But their advance was energetically halted. St.-Mihiel marked its farthest limit.

Thus both attacks on Verdun, one from the west by the Argonne, the other from the east by the Hauts de Meuse, failed completely, and the incessant efforts of the Kronprinz, kept up during a whole year in the forest of Argonne, met with insignificant results compared with the number of lives they cost. At last, unable to get around Verdun, no matter from what side they made the attempt, the Germans decided to attack it in front.

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One of the great principles of German strategy is that the main body of an enemy must be sought, attacked, and beaten first of all, no matter what else has to be disregarded. This is not a discovery of the Germans; they borrowed it from Napoleon, who made it the dominant rule of his strategy, and like all strategical rules, it is based on common sense; what is essential must be considered before what is merely accessory. In accordance with this doctrine, in the beginning of the war the Germans directed most of their efforts against France, who was, and is still, as the Kaiser declared not long ago, "the chief enemy."

Their first great offensive having met with disaster at the battle of the Marne, they tried a second a fortnight later at the battle of the Aisne, and a third, not long afterward, at the battle of the Yser.

Each of these efforts failed, and toward the end of 1914 the Germans found themselves held in check at every point of our front. What then shall they do? It stands

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to reason that they will reconstitute their forces, organize new divisions, new army corps, and again try to force a decisive issue where alone it can be found — that is to say, on the French front. France once beaten, Germany might consider the war at an end, but on the contrary, while France holds out, no matter what victories may be won elsewhere, the war will go on indefinitely.

Let us see what actually happened. In the course of 1915 the Germans made some very severe attacks, as at Vailly, Soissons, the trench fighting at Calonne, and when they used gas at Ypres, but these did not lead to anything. In the operations on the western front it was the Allies who took the initiative.

Nor could the fighting in the Argonne, no matter how fierce, be considered as a great offensive. At intervals of eight or ten days, during the last months of 1914 and the first half of 1915, the army of the Kron-

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prinz, which was composed of some of the best German troops, made exceedingly violent attacks in the forest of Argonne, in which a whole division or even two were engaged. Their object was clearly defined; it was to gain our trenches one after another, and little by little, through incessant effort, to push the French line toward the south in order to cut, or at least to interfere with, the only railway on which Verdun depended for her supplies.

During all that time the German strength was chiefly directed against Russia rather than France. Why did they give up their original plan? Why did they break one of the rules of their strategy? It was because political and diplomatic reasons intervened to counterbalance the judgment of the military authorities, and to force their hand. In the spring of 1915 the Russian army had reached the southern slopes of the Carpathians, directly menacing Hungary. Italy also was on the point of declaring war with

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Austria; the Dual Monarchy was likely to crumble away unless immediately assisted. Through her marvellous system of espionage Germany was fully informed of the scarcity of all sorts of munitions in the Russian army, and this was a good reason for attacking Russia while she could offer less resistance than France. It was therefore decided that the offensive should be on the eastern front. The movement was conducted with great vigor; its importance was undeniable, but it could not in any sense be regarded as conclusive.

This attack on the Russians was followed by another on the Serbians, and, with the effective assistance of the Bulgarians, Serbia and Montenegro were overrun.

But France determined to defend Salonica at whatever cost, and her ally, Great Britain, was of the same mind. A powerful and constantly increasing Anglo-French army assembled there, and although Germany blustered she did not dare to strike. The former

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situation repeated itself — Germany had made an advance without gaining any decisive result.

The end of 1915 brought her back, whether she would or no, to what was after all the essential point of the war — her struggle with France. The German people had been fed with false hopes and dazzled by glittering visions. They were told that when once the road to Constantinople was open the conquest of Egypt was certain, and Turkey and Bulgaria would furnish unlimited reserves to crush Germany's enemies. Those visions gradually faded, and reality had to be faced — the reality that until she had won a great victory over France Germany could not hope to end the war successfully.

Therefore, toward the end of 1915, the Germans determined to do what they had not attempted during the whole of the year — to make a supreme effort against the French front.

It is important to keep always in mind

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that they did this because they could not do otherwise; they had not, like England, Russia, and ourselves, resources which allowed them to wait; they knew that time was fighting not for but against them. The docile German press continued to assert that, as their armies occupied Belgium, Poland, and part of France, they were substantially victorious; in order to win it was not necessary that they should attack; they had but to keep the ground they already held.

The simple fact that the German General Staff felt obliged to undertake a great offensive against us proves the falsity of these asseverations. The staff was fully aware that it would be most difficult, in fact almost impossible, to force the French positions; its officers knew that lives by the hundreds of thousands must be sacrificed in order to gain a doubtful result. As, in face of such knowledge, an offensive was decided upon, it is self-evident that no other

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course was open, especially as an attack on Salonica was found to be impracticable.

Once it was settled that a thrust forward should be made, the point of attack had to be chosen. Why was that choice Verdun? There are many reasons to account for it. It was absolutely necessary that the French front should be penetrated at some especially important point. Also, since the Germans occupied St.-Mihiel, the sector of Verdun formed a salient which laid it open to a possible attack from three sides at the same time. Our front once broken through, both wings of the German army could envelop us and our defeat would become a disaster. Moreover, the sector of Verdun is cut in two from north to south by the Meuse, which gives the attacking party a distinct advantage. If troops on the right side of the river, which is the more exposed, were forced to retreat hurriedly, they could only do so by means of a limited number of bridges. In winter the Meuse often over-

flows its banks and floods the surrounding country, which would make the building of additional bridges a slow and difficult business; if the enemy should press on vigorously, bringing his heavy artillery to bear on the spots where he knows these bridges must be placed, retreat would become an exceedingly risky matter. Military history has often proved the truth of this, the battle of Leipsic being one of the most striking examples.

If we look at the railways we shall see yet another reason for the German decision. In ordinary times Verdun is supplied by two main railway lines, one running from south to north, by St.-Mihiel, the other going from west to east, by Ste.-Menehould. The first line was partly in the hands of the Germans since their occupation of St.-Mihiel. The second was exposed to the fire of the German batteries between St.-Mihiel and Verdun, especially in the region of Aubreville and Dombasle, where it makes a sharp elbow

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northward, and it would run great risk of being cut there. There is also a third line making a diagonal from Revigny to Verdun, but that is scarcely worth counting. As it was only meant to serve local interests, its capacity is very limited; it zigzags cheerfully across the fields like a drunken man, so much so that the country people call it "le tortillard" — the twister.

The Germans supposed that the defenders of Verdun would be seriously embarrassed by this inadequate railway system. Many trains are constantly needed in order to feed a large army, and above all to keep it supplied with munitions, and our enemy hoped that these trains could not be provided. But they did not take into account our admirable French roads, nor the ingenuity of our General Staff, which makes marvellous use of our network of highways, and had for some time been considering the possibility of supplying the needs of Verdun by motor-trucks alone. This motor-truck

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service is one of the best-regulated and most successful developments of the present war. Its creation and growth were only a matter of a few months, and it works to perfection; the officers responsible for it have certainly shown that a faculty for rapid and intelligent organization is a privilege not exclusively reserved for Germans. Any lingering doubt would be dispelled by a visit to one of our "army zones." An apparently endless procession of these trucks stretches out for miles along the road, each keeping its proper distance from the one ahead of it, and all moving with absolute precision and discipline. When the fighting began at Verdun thousands of them were in readiness, and by their means our great army was kept fully supplied with food and ammunition.

The German High Command had another reason for attacking Verdun, besides those of home politics and military strategy. Although they have since denied it, they intended to take the city in a few days, and

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thus prove to all the world the irresistible power of Germany. The neutral nations which were still hesitating would then make haste to range themselves beside her. The Teutonic General Staff is past master in the art of exaggeration, and when one remembers the capital which was made out of the advance on Fort Douaumont it is easy to imagine to what lyric flights the German press would have been inspired by the fall of Verdun.

With the sole exception of Paris, "Fertoun," as the Germans call it, has been more spoken of in their newspapers than any other French city. Half a dozen times since the war began its fall had been announced; each time the news was false, but now the German General Staff resolved to make it true.

The plan of the attack was to be a repetition, with more crushing force, of the victorious offensive made in the spring of 1915 on the Russian army in Galicia. A mass of

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infantry, supported by heavy artillery, was to be hurled against the centre of our positions; our front once broken, both wings of the German army would close in on the salient of Verdun like a vise, making our retreat disastrous, if not impossible.

In order to make sure of this result, all available forces were concentrated. Toward the end of 1915 some of the heavy guns which had been used in the Russian campaign were brought back, and as many as could be spared were withdrawn from the western front. It is estimated that there were two thousand guns, all of large caliber, in the appalling mass of artillery thus concentrated. The ordinary field-piece was little used; the work was done chiefly by those much heavier: "105," "210," "305," "380," up to "420." It was expected that this deluge of fire would annihilate our trenches and the men in them, rendering it impossible for us to hold our positions.

For this enormous amount of artillery

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enormous quantities of munitions were provided; great piles of shells and bombs were accumulated in every possible place throughout the region which the Germans held. The supplies thus in readiness, they proceeded to organize the assaulting army.

As the Germans have not an inexhaustible supply of men, they could no longer make new divisions and army corps, as they had done at the battle of the Yser. For three or four months they had been withdrawing their finest corps from other fronts in order to make them into a phalanx such as Mackensen had thrown against the Russians. These corps were the Fifteenth, brought back from the region of Ypres; the Eighteenth, from the Somme; the Seventh Reserve Corps, from the Aisne; and the Third, part of which had been on the Serbian front, but had done no fighting. All these corps were allowed to rest at a distance from the front, in comfortable quarters, and the men were abundantly fed; some of the

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German prisoners said they had been given double rations of meat and triple of coffee. One of these corps, the Fifteenth, which is in garrison at Strasburg in time of peace, ranks with the corps usually garrisoning Metz as among the best in the army.

In November and December, 1914, during the battle of the Yser, I was in the sector of Ypres, directly facing this corps, and it was the opinion of competent judges that no troops in the German army fought with more dash and vigor, while their commander, General von Daimling, was of exceptional ability. An order of the day was found on one of our prisoners at Verdun, in which this general announced to his men that the decisive moment had come at last, and that their irresistible attack on Verdun would at once put an end to the war.

These four corps, intended especially for the assault, were largely made up of the most vigorous soldiers from the class of 1916, who had been drilled and trained with the utmost care. The formations of officers

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and non-commissioned officers had been entirely made over. During the last months of 1915 the German General Staff was obviously careful of officers, knowing that they could not easily be replaced, but in the attack on Verdun, which was meant to be conclusive, the officers received orders to sacrifice themselves without reserve. They were required to lead their men in order to make the assault more impetuous and overwhelming.

These four army corps were thus brought into the sector of Verdun and inserted, like a wedge, into the army of the Kronprinz, which crowded to right and left in order to make room for them. Three of his corps were also to attack, making seven army corps ready for the great offensive.

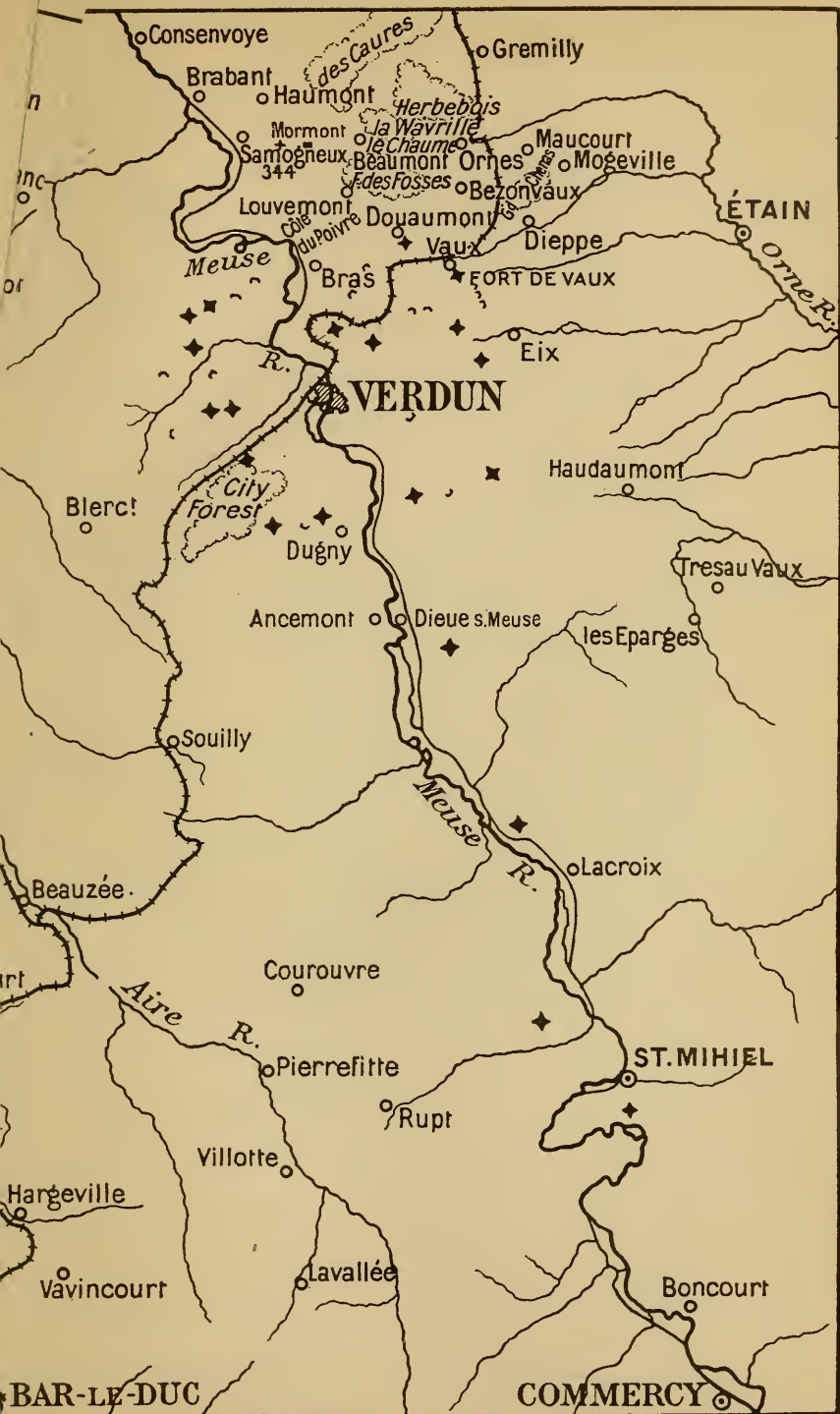
The positions occupied by the French just before the great battle are well known, having been accurately given in an official publication from our General Headquarters, made in the *Bulletin des Armées*.

Our left, starting from the Meuse, rested

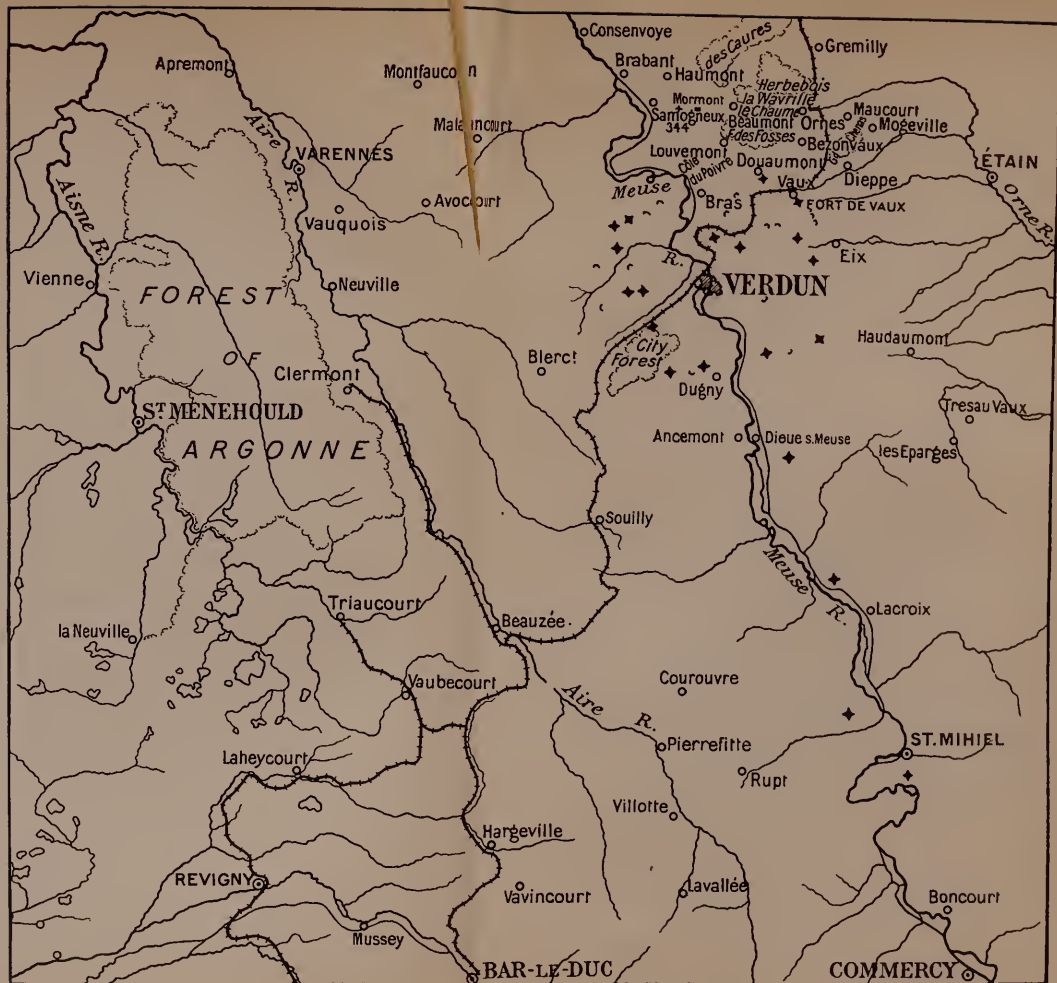
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on Brabant, Consenvoye, and Les Caures; on our centre we held the wood of Ville, L'Herbebois, and Ornes; our right included Maucourt, Mogeville, the pool of Braux, and the wood of Hautes Charrières. Behind this first line was a second, taking in the village of Samogneux, hill (or "côte") 344, the Mormont farm, Beaumont, La Wavrille, Les Fosses, Le Chaume, Les Carrières, Bezonvaux, Grand Chenas, and Dieppe. Still farther to the rear, with the village of Bras as a landmark, came the line of the forts of Verdun; Douaumont, Hardaumont, Vaux, La Laufée, and Eix. Between them and our second line a series of counter-sloping trenches ran from Douaumont to Louvemont, on the "côtes" of Poivre and Talou.

If our first line is followed on the map it will be seen to form an arc of a vast circle, beginning at the Meuse, stretching to its centre at Verdun, and ending as far up as Etain, in the plain of Woëvre. In this arc the sector most fiercely attacked was that



THE SURROUNDING REGION.



VERDUN AND THE SURROUNDING REGION.

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between Brabant and Ornes, which forms a decided salient. Artillery fire could sweep it on three sides: from the heights of Montfaucon and the wood of Forges on the west, where it made a noticeable curve inward; from the north; and also from the east.

It must be borne in mind that, from its nature, this first line of ours could only be held against a violent attack with the greatest difficulty, and this is true of our second line as well. The part of prudence would therefore be to fall back gradually from one line to another, not risking a decisive engagement until a favorable position could be reached. This was what our General Staff decided to do.

The first four weeks of the war (August and September, 1914) and the first four days of the battle of Verdun (February 21st-25th) resemble each other strongly in general outline, and in what may be termed the rhythm of their operations. I wish to call attention to this, because to my mind it is the domi-

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nant and essential feature of these great military events. In August, 1914, as in February, 1916, the Germans made extraordinary preparations; they studied the plan of their offensive in all its details; they accumulated a formidable number of men and an inexhaustible amount of ammunition; their officers and soldiers alike were ready to throw themselves into the attack with the greatest impetuosity. The method and the force of this offensive were so irresistible that the French High Command found it necessary to fall back, and some ground was given up in order that a successful stand might be made later. It was yielding a side issue; the important, the vital point, was to win the battle finally; whether a few leagues or kilometres more or less to the north or south was of no consequence. Our troops retired until the favorable moment came, and then, when the Germans were sure we were beaten, we struck with our full force, and at the crucial moment defeat was turned into victory. From that time the Germans

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were stopped, and in several places driven back; all their efforts and sacrifices were useless, and only served to mark the importance of their check.

That was the rhythm of the first four weeks of the war, up to the battle of the Marne, and it was also the rhythm of the first four days of the battle of Verdun, up to the recapture of the Fort of Douaumont by our Twentieth Corps.

First act: The French fall back as the Germans advance.

Second act: A decisive battle ends in victory for the French.

Third act: The Germans are held in check; they may move to and fro, but they can make no serious advance, and will wear themselves out to no purpose.

I. THE GERMAN ATTACK AND THE FRENCH RETREAT

On the 21st of February, at a quarter past seven in the morning, the bombardment of Verdun began, and continued with

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an intensity which made the German fire during the war, even at the battles of Champagne and Artois, seem like child's play in comparison. The number of pieces of heavy artillery which fired incessantly was stupendous; French aviators flying over the German lines agreed in reporting that in the region to the north of our positions, especially in Spincourt and the woods adjoining, it was "like a display of fireworks." Such an incessant cannonade came from the little wood of Grémilly, north of La Jumelle, that our observers had to give up marking on their cards the different batteries in action; they were everywhere; the guns stood almost wheel to wheel. That went on for hours, and at four o'clock in the afternoon the firing became still more intense; it was as if thousands of rockets were being sent up for the "bouquet" of the show. In order to make our positions untenable, asphyxiating and lachrymatory bombs were mingled with the heavy projectiles, while six captive

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balloons floated over the German lines and directed their aim. Our first lines were almost levelled by this avalanche of steel — trenches, parapets, shelters, no matter how well made, were utterly destroyed. Then, toward five o'clock, the first infantry attack was launched.

The Germans were convinced that their infernal fire had made it impossible for our infantry to hold their ground, and counted on occupying our positions almost without resistance on our part. Most of the work would have been done by their artillery; they need only advance and occupy ground which had been evacuated. The German tactics during their attacks on Verdun were all based on this conviction. The artillery must strike systematically and with crushing force on every point of our line, making a zone of death around all our centres of resistance. When the destruction seemed complete, part of the infantry was sent forward to examine the effect of the firing.

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Each reconnoitring group was made up of about fifteen men; behind them came the bomb-throwers, and after them again the first great wave of infantry. In this instance they did not sufficiently take into account the magnificent courage of our soldiers. In spite of the blasting fire they stuck to their positions, making the most of every little inequality of the ground, and crouching low in the yawning holes made by the great shells. As the Germans advanced their ranks were mown down like grass by our mitrailleuses. Then the bombardment began again. No sooner was one attack repulsed than another came on, and at the end of the first day the enemy had a foothold in some of the trenches of our first line, and in a few places had even got as far as our supporting trenches. They had also taken the woods of Haumont and Caures, but the southern part of Caures was won back by the splendid bravery of Lieutenant-Colonel Driant and his chasseurs. In the region of Soumazannes, the wood of

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Ville and L'Herbebois, our supporting line still held firm.

The morning of the 22d was cold and snowy, and about half past seven the Germans began to warm us, in the western part of the sector, by throwing jets of liquid fire into the wood of Consenvoye. Thanks to these "flammenwerfer" they managed to get to the bottom of a ravine; in Herbebois and the wood of Ville the hand-to-hand fighting was bloody and determined. The German artillery fire became still more violent; great gusts of flame swept over Anglemont, the Mormont farm, and La Wavrille. The village of Haumont was in the hottest of it; but the gallant men who held it stood close around their colonel and fought until the last; it was six o'clock in the afternoon before the enemy could get into its ruins. By the end of the day we had lost the wood of Ville, but we still held most of Herbebois and La Wavrille.

The troops had no protection; main and

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communication trenches, shelters, centres of defense — all were battered to pieces; it was fighting in the open. Night fell; in the cold and the snow, under the unceasing bombardment, our men hastily dug themselves in again. It was absolutely necessary to stop the German advance, in order to give our reserves time to come up; the men knew it, and although they were tired out they worked, as they had fought, like demons.

During the night of the 22d-23d we evacuated Brabant. The village of Samogneux was under such heavy fire that a counter-attack on our part was impossible, and we were obliged to remain on the defensive. To the eastward the Germans had got within eight hundred metres of the farms of Anglemont and Mormont, and were shelling them with their 305-mm. and 380-mm. guns. It was an infernal rain of fire, but with admirable energy and discipline our men held their positions.

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At six in the morning of the 23d the enemy attacked La Wavrille and was repulsed. In L'Herbebois the fighting was desperate all day. The northern border of this wood is a thick coppice about five hundred metres wide; the Germans, who wanted to carry this position at any cost, attacked here in great force and in close formation. The French waited until they were within fifty metres and then opened on them with volley-firing by platoons; our mitrailleuses and "75's" also fired at close range into the solid mass. Whole ranks were wiped out at a time; it was downright slaughter. This first attack having failed, four others were launched, with the same result. The fighting became furious beyond description. In one of our communicating trenches, four grenadiers threw bombs steadily for more than twenty hours; it was death for whoever tried to pass them. The Germans, in spite of all their efforts and their reckless squandering of life, could not gain a foot of ground. But

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unfortunately, as night fell, after incessant attacks, they succeeded in taking La Waville, and the holders of Herbebois were obliged to fall back or risk being flanked. The men, fighting-mad, refused to retreat, choosing rather to die where they stood.

Again, on the 24th, the Germans advanced and again we fell back, having evacuated the village of Samogneux during the night, as it was in a very dangerous position. A French regiment was stationed astride of the road from Samogneux to Vacherauville, with orders to hold "côte" 344, whatever happened. The Germans knew how important this road was and did their best to get it. Five or six times they tried to make their way out of Samogneux, each time to be met by the combined fire of our infantry, our mitrailleuses, and our artillery. Their losses were frightful, and it was evening before they succeeded in fastening themselves on the "côte." By that time the village of Beaumont, the wood of Fosses, and Le

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Chaume had been already occupied for some hours.

At twenty minutes past two in the afternoon a large German force poured out between Louvemont and "côte" 347; the village of Ornes, attacked on three sides at once (a danger to which it had always been exposed), was almost surrounded and had to be evacuated. That threw us back on the line of the forts.

The Germans were sure they had won this greatest war game. One last effort would make them masters of the heights above Verdun, and our army would be forced to retire in disorder.

II. THE COUNTER-ATTACK AND THE FRENCH RECOVERY

And yet all the elements which were to come to our rescue were already at hand. Our High Command had had time to bring up important reserves, which, coming into action at the right time and place, would

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at once change the situation. These reserves could not have been used effectively until the real object of the enemy was clear; it might be that he was only making a feint before Verdun and would strike his chief blow at another point of our lines. It was necessary that he should come on, and thus show his hand. The heroic resistance of our men for three days to numbers much greater than their own, their fierce disputing of every foot of ground, their wearing down of the German resistance had given our reinforcements this necessary time.

On that day of desperate fighting, the 24th, Major-General de Castelnau left headquarters in order to decide upon the spot what measures he should take. He came; he made up his mind without hesitation. His orders were that the reserves should come into action at once, and at whatever cost stop the German advance on our principal lines.

That same day General Pétain arrived,

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with all his staff, to take active command of the troops defending Verdun.

In one of my former chapters, "The French Offensive in Champagne," I described this general, one of the glories of our army and of France. "He is tall, slim, young-looking, with an air of extreme distinction, quick, incisive speech, and resolute blue eyes. Whenever those eyes of his light on a new face he feels the immediate need to label and classify it, and store away the image in some pigeonhole of his marvelously lucid memory, where thereafter it will always have its distinctive place. Looking at him and listening to him, one has the impression that the art of warfare is above all things a matter of precision, forethought, and tenacity. The masters of military science, the men predestined to shine in war, are those in whom the balance between brain and character, between understanding and willing, is most perfectly adjusted."

One of our finest army corps was im-

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patiently waiting to be sent into action. Since the war began it had been in battle wherever fighting was to be found; in Flanders, in Artois, and in Champagne, winning laurels everywhere.

This corps was now thrown into the furnace without hesitation. The German advance was checked; their offensive broken; they could go no farther.

It was bitter cold, and drifting snow hindered the march of our columns. The German artillery tried to stop the coming of our reinforcements by a formidable curtain fire and by shelling our rear lines incessantly. But our men, knowing the value of those fateful hours, marched with eager hearts, regardless of all obstacles. As an official communiqué said: "It was like the battle of the Marne — the cry of 'Forward!' gave them superhuman courage."

The principal field of the great fight was the table-land of Douaumont, which is to the battle of Verdun what the marshes of

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St.-Gond, the Château of Mondement, and the plain of Fère-Champenoise were to the battle of the Marne.

On the morning of the 25th the Germans made a fierce attack on the "côte" of Poivre, carrying the villages of Louvemont and Bezonvaux. Before Douaumont the fighting was fiendish; by five o'clock in the afternoon the village seemed to be surrounded. While this violent struggle was going on, a party of Brandenburgers, belonging to the Third Corps, managed to creep up to the fort of Douaumont, and held on there.

The Teutonic General Staff forthwith trumpeted to the world that "the armored fort of Douaumont, the corner-stone of the French defense of Verdun, has been carried by a Brandenburg regiment"; and wireless messages everywhere proclaimed this victory as positive. But it was only temporary. By the time the news was spread abroad our troops had thrust back the enemy by a vigorous counter-attack, and were closing

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around the Brandenburgers. A bloody struggle followed; the Germans, knowing how much depended on it, did their utmost to widen the breach they had made toward the fort of Douaumont; the village of Douaumont was taken and retaken, but all the German effort and bloodshed were in vain — henceforth their advance was definitely controlled.

III. THE FIGHTING ON OUR WINGS AND THE GERMAN CHECK

When the Germans found that their frontal attack was not the conclusive success for which they had striven, they decided, after a pause, to attack both our wings, on the left bank of the Meuse. This movement was to be carried out by the army of the Kronprinz, with the help of the picked corps which had joined it. In an order of the day dated March 4th the Kronprinz exhorted his troops to prepare themselves for the supreme effort necessary to take

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Verdun, "the heart of France." Our positions on the left bank of the Meuse now formed more or less of a salient, compared to those on its right bank, where our troops had been obliged to draw back, and against this salient the German attack was accordingly directed.

The same movement which had taken place on the right side now repeated itself. We held our first line only long enough to retard the German advance, but when they reached our principal positions at Mort-Homme and "côte" 304 they could go no farther. Then began a series of very bloody struggles. The wood of Corbeaux, for instance, was taken and retaken and lost over and over again, the enemy only succeeding in holding it after a third attack.

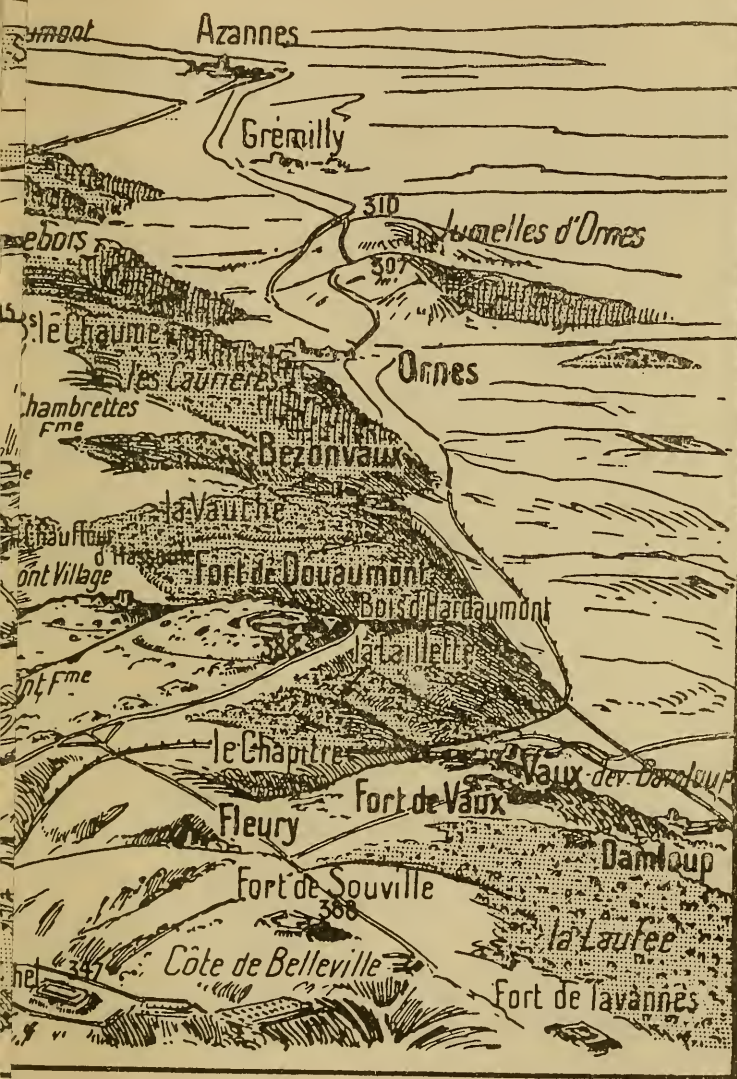
On the 14th of March, new German divisions having come up, another fierce attempt was made. Mort-Homme was shelled even more heavily than at the beginning of the battle; every infernal modern projectile,

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time and percussion bombs, asphyxiating and lachrymatory shells were hurled on our positions; one hundred and twenty were counted in a single minute.

When at last, about three in the afternoon, the German infantry swept forward, most of the men in our trenches were half suffocated and almost buried alive. "Côte" 265 was taken, but the little peak 295 remained in our hands.

While the fighting on the left bank of the Meuse was going on, an attack was also made on the fort and village of Vaux, on the right side of the river, east of Douaumont, and on the 8th of March a vigorous offensive gave the German infantry possession of the first houses of the village, from which they were almost entirely driven out by a brilliant counter-attack on our part. At no time did they get near the fort, which lies to the rear; a fact which did not prevent their authorities from issuing the following sensational communiqué: "The 6th and 19th





RELIEF MAP OF LE MORT-HOMME AND THE HILLS NORTH OF VERDUN.

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Regiments of Posen Reserves, led by General von Guretski-Cornitz, have stormed the armored fort of Vaux, and have also taken many other fortifications in that neighborhood."

It so happened that, at the very time when this "news" was being rushed everywhere, one of the officers of our General Staff went into the fort of Vaux and was able to assure himself that it had not been attacked, and that the troops holding it were quite undisturbed. Our General Staff thereupon immediately contradicted the lying report in the most positive manner.

Again, as in the case of the *Sussex*, the intentional bad faith of our enemy was exposed, but that did not disconcert him; it was then announced that the fort had been taken, and retaken later by a French counter-attack. It was not necessary for us to retake Vaux, for the simple reason that we had never lost it.

Day followed day, and the attacks on our

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right and left wings led to no more decisive result than those made at first on our centre. The German assaulting corps, which had borne the brunt of the fighting, were decimated and worn out; some of the regiments had lost as high as sixty per cent of their officers and men. It was absolutely necessary that they should be sent to the rear to rest and be reorganized.

But the officers of the German General Staff were well aware that the whole world had its eyes upon Verdun. They knew they were playing for a high stake, and that the outcome of the war depended to a great extent on the mighty struggle on both sides of the Meuse. Therefore, rather than acknowledge failure, they decided to redouble their efforts. New divisions were hurried forward to replace those which were exhausted, and on the 9th of April another very violent attack was hurled against our positions on the left bank of the river, at "côte" 304. But there were no longer suf-

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ficient reserves to give this thrust the power and scope of those in the beginning. All that could be done was to bring up one division after another, to relieve those which were most exhausted. Heavy artillery could be used like a battering-ram against one or other of our positions, but there was no longer any question of a general advance. I wish to dwell upon this point, for a new phase of the battle has begun.

In order to be convinced of the magnitude of the German failure, one has but to follow the successive changes in the tone of the Teutonic press as the struggle dragged on.

It was taken for granted that the advance on Verdun would strike us like a thunderbolt. The Kronprinz said so in a proclamation, and the Kaiser, as usual, made an inspiring visit to the army about to fall on us. In a Bavarian newspaper, the *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten*, Colonel Medicus proudly wrote later: "Our ring of steel is visibly tightening around the fortress; we shall

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therefore be able to record a great and decisive victory, of which the consequences will be felt at once; of this the governor of Verdun must be sadly certain." This was at the time when the German wireless stations were busily spreading the news broadcast that "the armored fort of Douaumont, the cornerstone of the defense of Verdun," had been carried by storm under the eyes of the Kaiser. The press, usually so carefully muzzled, was allowed to say what it chose: the *Rheinische Westfälische Zeitung* declared that "the taking of the fort of Douaumont, which breaks the circle of forts at its most vulnerable point, makes it possible to predict the speedy fall of the fortress itself." The *Frankfurter Zeitung* improved on this forecast by saying: "It is clear that men who have not recoiled before the defenses of Douaumont, one of the strongest fortresses in France, will not be stopped by any slighter resistance."

As time went on, and Verdun did not

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fall, it became necessary to put a damper on this enthusiasm. The German press was therefore ordered to exhort the public to possess its soul in patience. All the military critics explained carefully to their readers that the delay was foreseen and intentional. The *Berliner Tageblatt* of March 15th said: "Spoiled by the extraordinary rapidity of the campaign which made us masters of the Russian fortresses last summer, we sometimes make the mistake of comparing it with the present fighting on the western front, which has for its objective the fall of Verdun."

Days lengthened into weeks, and the fortress still stood; so the press faced about, gravely affirming that the General Staff had never *really* meant to take Verdun at all, and that any such statement was a malevolent and perfidious invention of the French. The staff had only attacked at that point in order to prevent the general offensive for which the French were making ready.

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These contradictions are very significant and enlightening, because they bear witness to the hopes, the fears, and the disappointment of the German people from day to day.

To sum up one may say: First, Germany knew that a war of erosion must of necessity be to her disadvantage, because time was working against her, and the resources of England, Russia, and France were increasing, while her own steadily diminished. She therefore meant to end the struggle by a smashing blow, and chose the sector of Verdun in order to deal this blow to her "chief enemy," France. After masterly preparation she had accumulated in this sector all the resources in men and munitions of which she could dispose. The result of the first four days of the battle was in her favor, but as soon as our reserves came up her advance was checked. Willing to sacrifice any number of lives in order to win, she has drawn ruthlessly on her reserves, and at the end of three months of carnage she

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finds herself in the position of a desperate gambler who has risked his fortune on a single stake, only to find that luck has turned against him.

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